

# Quality of Horizontal Coordination

Sustainable Governance Indicators 2024



Indicator **Effective Coordination Mechanisms of the GO/PMO**

Question **To what extent do established coordination mechanisms between the government's office and line ministries effectively enhance policy coherence?**

30 OECD and EU countries are sorted according to their performance on a scale from 10 (best) to 1 (lowest). This scale is tied to four qualitative evaluation levels.

- 10-9 = Functional coordination mechanisms between line ministries and the GO/PMO, aimed at enhancing policy coherence, are in place.
- 8-6 = Largely functional coordination mechanisms between line ministries and the GO/PMO, aimed at enhancing policy coherence, are in place.
- 5-3 = Coordination mechanisms between line ministries and the GO/PMO, aimed at enhancing policy coherence, are only somewhat functional.
- 2-1 = Coordination mechanisms between line ministries and the GO/PMO, aimed at enhancing policy coherence, are not at all functional.

## Finland

Score 10 The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has the capacity to evaluate proposed policy. The PMO's resources have increased considerably over the last decade, with many new appointments. The primary function of the PMO is to support the duties of the prime minister, who directs the work of the government and coordinates the preparation and consideration of government business.

The PMO monitors the implementation of the government program and coordinates Finland's EU policy. Additionally, the PMO coordinates communications between the government and various ministries, plans future-oriented social policies, and promotes cooperation between the government and different branches of public administration. The PMO encompasses the Government EU Affairs Department, the Government Administration Department, the Ownership Steering Department, the Government Communications Department, the Government Strategy Department and the Government Session Unit. The PMO has a state secretary, a permanent state undersecretary and approximately 550 employees distributed across several task-specific units.

The PMO has the necessary capacity, including personnel and financial resources, to evaluate policy proposals from line ministries and ensure they are aligned with the government's overall priorities. Line ministries are required to involve the Government Office (GO)/PMO in the preparation of policy proposals not only for legal and technical matters but also for programmatic aspects. This involvement

occurs through ministry committees and ministerial working groups under the PMO. Regular meetings take place between the GO/PMO and line ministries, during which the GO/PMO receives briefings on new developments that may impact policy proposal preparations.

The PMO regularly provides assessments of draft bills for the head of government. The Finnish Council of Regulatory Impact Analysis, which reports to the PMO, is responsible for issuing statements on government proposals and their regulatory impact assessments. The council strives to enhance the quality of draft laws, specifically by focusing on improving the impact assessment of government proposals. Its objectives include the development of the entire law drafting process, covering aspects such as scheduling, the planning of government proposals and the overall refinement of the law drafting procedure. To achieve these goals, a dedicated agency has been established for this purpose.

## Canada

### Score 9

The Canadian government features key central agencies, specifically the Privy Council Office (PCO), the Finance Department, and the Treasury Board Secretariat. These agencies are intended to coordinate political-administrative relations and ensure program coherence and overall fiscal direction for line departments. The PCO's role in coordinating government legislation is paramount and part of its broader mandate to support the prime minister and the Cabinet in administering government affairs. While individual government departments and agencies are responsible for developing specific pieces of legislation, the PCO plays a coordinating and facilitative role to ensure a cohesive and effective legislative agenda.

The PCO plays a central role in coordinating government legislation and supporting the overall functioning of the government. As a key institution within the executive branch, it serves the prime minister and the Cabinet. Although its primary responsibilities extend beyond legislative coordination, its role in this area is substantial. The PCO facilitates policy coordination across government departments and agencies, ensuring that proposed legislation aligns with the government's overall policy objectives and priorities. This coordination involves the development of legislative proposals and their consistency with the government's agenda. Additionally, the PCO works with government departments to establish legislative agendas, identify key priorities, and allocate resources for the development and advancement of legislation.

The PCO also provides administrative support to the Cabinet, the central decision-making body in the Canadian system of government. Its tasks include assisting in the development of legislative initiatives, preparing Cabinet submissions, ensuring that proposed legislation receives appropriate consideration, and managing Order-in-

Council appointments. This includes coordinating legal reviews of proposed legislation to ensure compliance with legal requirements, constitutional principles, and government policy. It may work closely with the Department of Justice – responsible for legal drafting – to refine and finalize legislative texts.

From this central vantage point, the PCO promotes collaboration and communication among various government departments involved in developing legislation. This coordination is crucial for addressing interdepartmental issues, streamlining processes, and ensuring a cohesive approach to legislative matters.

The PCO also supports the government’s engagement with Parliament. This includes preparing speeches from the throne, coordinating the government’s legislative agenda in the House of Commons and the Senate, and assisting in responding to parliamentary inquiries.

Critical as well, the Finance Department reviews all proposals coming forward to the Cabinet from line departments, ensuring these are aligned with the fiscal framework and spending priorities. The Treasury Board Secretariat reviews the proposals to ensure program design and resourcing can deliver on intended objectives and that there is no duplication in line ministry initiatives.

The coordination continues after legislation is passed, with the PCO involved in supporting its implementation. This can include coordinating efforts to ensure that government departments and agencies are prepared to operationalize new laws and policies (Wernick 2021). The Treasury Board Secretariat continues to monitor program integrity, and the Finance Department oversees the fiscal framework. These assessments are considered when new initiatives come forward from line departments in upcoming policy cycles.

Citation:

Canada. Department of Finance. 2023. 2023-24 Departmental Plan. Ottawa: His Majesty the King in Right of Canada.

Canada. Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. 2023. 2023-24 Departmental Plan. Ottawa: His Majesty the King in Right of Canada.

Wernick, Michael. 2021. *Governing Canada: A Guide to the Tradecraft of Politics*. Toronto: On Point Press.

## Denmark

Score 9

The Social Democratic prime minister during the review period, Mette Frederiksen, has argued that the Prime Minister’s Office is too weak compared to the Ministry of Finance and the line ministries. Since first taking office in 2019, she has increased the number of employees dramatically, adding approximately 20 full-time staff and expanding the ministry’s size from 84 to 104 full-time academic employees.

Prime Minister Frederiksen also established the Political Secretariat to ensure better coordination among ministers and to monitor whether ministries are following

legislative plans. This move was criticized by the opposition, which argued that there is no tradition in Denmark for political appointees taking on significant posts in ministries. However, it was defended by the prime minister, who contended that the posts would ensure that the government's policy line would be respected. The official description of the Political Secretariat on the PMO's website states that it has "a special focus on the government's priority projects and policy development, and is working to strengthen the strategic direction of the government and increase internal coordination between ministers and special advisers."

The government in power during the review period was composed of the Social Democratic Party, the Liberal Party (Venstre) and the Moderates (Moderaterne). The Liberals and Social Democrats have historically been political rivals. Consequently, when the government formed, it also created the Committee for Government Management. The three party leaders from the governing parties are members of this committee, as are the minister of finance and the minister of economic affairs (Regeringsgrundlag 2022).

Internal government coordination of policy takes place in two central committees that in practice serve as inner cabinets. The first committee is called the Economic Committee (økonomi udvalget) and the second is the Coordination Committee (koordinationsudvalget). The number of members in these committees varies according to the number of parties in the government. The Economic Committee is always chaired by the minister of finance and, under the current government, has eight members: three Social Democrats, three from the Liberal Party and two from the Moderates.

Finally, since the enactment of the Climate Law in 2020, the government has been required to form a Green Committee. This committee, consisting of six members, is chaired by the minister of finance and is required to follow cross-ministerial environmental policies. The committee meets weekly.

Citation:

Regeringsgrundlag 2022. Ansvar for Danmark. <https://www.stm.dk/statsministeriet/publikationer/regeringsgrundlag-2022/>

## Australia

Score 8

Significant coordination mechanisms exist between the center, prime minister, and line ministries in Australia. The cabinet is the principal forum for ensuring a whole-of-government approach. Although the Cabinet operates collectively with shared decision-making and responsibility, its processes provide the prime minister with unique resources for agenda setting and establishing decision-making rules. One risk of the Australian line management system is over-centralization, prioritizing coherence over the benefits of decentralization, checks and balances, and some autonomy for line ministries. This risk was evident during the COVID-19 pandemic

when it was revealed that then-Prime Minister Scott Morrison secretly assumed direct control of five ministries without informing his cabinet colleagues.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic merely exacerbated trends that have been decades in the making. As political scientist James Walter (2021) points out, Australian prime ministers have built up resources around their office to enhance their autonomy and influence. The result is the creation of “retail” leaders who are primarily experts in delivering the message and “winning” what they see as a permanent campaign.

Citation:

Walter, J. 2021. “Power without Purpose.” Inside Story September 24. <https://insidestory.org.au/power-without-purpose/>

## Belgium

Score 8

All government proposals in Belgium go through the Prime Minister’s Office and are discussed in a “kern” (core) meeting with the proposing minister, the prime minister, and the vice-prime ministers (one per party in the coalition). This ensures close coordination, sometimes following heated negotiations. If a proposal cannot be agreed upon, it can be vetoed or delayed in an attempt at logrolling.

The PMO contains a “strategic cell” that helps the prime minister evaluate and steer policy across all levels. Each adviser and expert in the cell specializes in one field, assessing only the most important issues due to the team’s relatively small size. Given that governments are always coalitions (comprising at least four parties), party advisers of the corresponding minister also play a central role in the lawmaking process.

Before implementation, each government project is submitted to the ministers’ council, which meets weekly. The council, composed of a secretariat that scrutinizes each proposal and prepares the agenda, includes 14 line ministers and the prime minister, who debate each proposal. Decisions are made based on political consensus, not a majority vote.

One notable feature of the Belgian system is the coexistence of politically appointed experts who work closely with their minister and professional civil servants who work in the administration. The tenure of politically appointed experts typically matches that of their minister, whereas civil servants can hold their positions for life. Some ministers try to impose a strict chain of command on their ministry, which may occasionally hamper communication across various administrations. However, whenever the government wants to table a proposal to parliament, the coordination process described above must take place.

Either directly or through the council’s secretariat, the prime minister can block or impose the redrafting of any proposal if it does not fit the government agreement or

conflicts with a coalition party's agenda, or for any other reason. All government members must defend accepted projects on a collegial basis.

This requirement has caused conflicts in the current government, which includes left-wing, right-wing, Christian Democrat, and Green parties. For example, in December 2023, the government could not agree on the appointment of a top civil servant, holding all other appointments hostage, which left several positions unfilled. As a result, the governor of the Belgian National Bank could not see his tenure renewed on time, forcing an external committee to reconfirm the governor ad interim at the last moment. Fortunately, such mishaps are rare..

Citation:

<http://www.premier.be/fr/conseil-des-ministres>

Structuur van de Vlaamse overheid | Vlaanderen.be

<https://www.belspo.be/belspo/fedra/prog.asp?l=fr&COD=AM>

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=19946&langId=en>

<https://openjournals.ugent.be/rp/article/id/72873/download/pdf/>

<https://www.law.kuleuven.be/apps/jura/public/art/46n4/dejaegere.pdf>

## Czechia

Score 8

The Office of the Government of the Czech Republic (GO) is a central body of state administration that performs tasks related to the professional, organizational, and technical support of government activities. It provides support for government meetings by preparing programs and documents. Additionally, it assists the expert bodies of the prime minister and members of the government who do not have their own departments, as well as 19 advisory and working bodies of the government. These bodies include representatives from ministries and external organizations, creating a framework for coordination in preparing legislation and long-term plans across government departments and with the prime minister.

An additional 14 committees fall under individual ministries but have similarly broad compositions. They cover a wide range of areas such as state security policy, human rights, economic policy, the Roma minority, relations with the EU, sustainable development, and energy strategy.

The Government Office's role in strategic planning and coordination across the government was weakened by the abolition – and continued absence – of a strategic planning team. In 2023, a Government Analytical Unit was established to restore and strengthen the office's capacity to coordinate policies and strategies.

## France

Score 8

Policy coordination once a policy proposal has been forwarded to the prime minister is developed at three levels. The first is the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the second is the President's Office and the third, when the subject is either legislation or

regulation, is the Council of State (Eymeri-Douzans 2022). This hierarchical organization gives the prime minister the option of modifying ministers' draft bills. For important issues, this steering function is shared with the President's Office, and entails strong cooperation and collaboration between the two secretaries-general – the directeur de cabinet for the PMO and the secrétaire général for the president – respectively at the Matignon and the Élysée. Both the president and the prime minister appoint civil servants from all ministries or from civil society as sectoral policy advisers. All ministerial domains are covered in this regard. Several hundred highly qualified people are involved in government steering, monitoring, oversight and advising functions.

However, it would probably be overstated to consider these various checks a method of evaluation. The PMO mainly coordinates and arbitrates between ministries, takes into consideration opinions and criticisms from involved interests and from the majority coalition, and balances political benefits and risks. The President's Office does more or less the same in coordination with the PMO. It is also quite often the case that the initiative leading to a bill's introduction comes from the presidential office. Rather than offering a thorough policy evaluation, these two institutions serve as a place where the ultimate political arbitrations between bureaucrats, party activists and vested interests are carried out. Evaluation is more implicit than explicit, since the impetus for reform tends to derive from dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs (Gaiti 2019).

Line ministers have limited independent room for maneuver. They have to inform the prime minister of all their projects. Strong discipline is imposed even at the level of public communication, and this rule is reinforced by the media, which tend to judge any slight policy difference as the expression of political tension or party divergence. As the Prime Minister's Office oversees the policy process, the officeholder's cabinet assistants in each area supervise, liaise and coordinate with their counterparts in line ministries about the content, timing and political sequences of a project.

The secretary-general of the PMO (as well as his counterpart at the Élysée) operates with some reserve. He or she can step in if the coordination or oversight process at that level has failed to stem the expression of differences within the government. Traditionally, the secretary-general is a member of the Council of State and – even though this figure could be fired at any time for any reason – there is a tradition of continuity and stability beyond the fluctuations and political vagaries of individual governments.

Given the presidential character of the Fifth Republic, the same type of control is exerted by the President's Office in coordination with the PMO. In practice, the two secretaries-general are the most powerful civil servants whose opinions might often prevail on ministry choices. Today, the choice of secretaries-general for line ministries has to be negotiated with the President's Office, when they are not imposed.

Coordination is strong across the French government. It is in the hands of the PMO and the President's Office, which liaise constantly and make decisions on every issue. Coordination takes place at several levels. First, at the level of specialized civil servants who work as political appointees in the PMO (members of the cabinet, that is, political appointees belonging to the staff of the prime minister), then in meetings chaired by the secretary-general, and finally by the prime minister in case of permanent conflicts between ministers or over important issues. In many instances, conflicts place the powerful budget minister or minister of finance in opposition to other ministries. Appeals to the prime minister require either a powerful convincing argument or a situation in which the appealing party is a key member of the government coalition, as it is understood that the prime minister should not be bothered by anything but the highest-level issues. But the prime ministerial route often serves as a shortcut to a direct appeal for a decision by the president.

The Council of Ministers meets once a week. There are also a large number of interministerial committees chaired by the prime minister or the president. Most of these committees meet upon request. While many of them hold meetings every week, these are usually attended by the ministers dealing with the topics discussed.

Citation:

Eymeri-Douzans, J. M. 2022. "France: Under the Rule of a Contested Politico-Administrative Elite Whose Legitimacy Erodes." In *Handbook on the Politics of Public Administration*, eds. 289-302. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Gaïti, B. 2019. "Gouverner le Gouvernement : les trajectoires des politiques de coordination gouvernementale en France (1935-2019)." *Revue française d'administration publique* 171: 565-585. Available at <https://doi.org/10.3917/rfap.171.0565>

## Greece

Score 8

Horizontal, interministerial coordination processes have been streamlined since at least 2019 when a new law on government organization was adopted. This coordination is overseen by the Prime Minister's Office, which was upgraded and renamed the Presidency of the Government in 2019, functioning similarly to a Government Office or Prime Minister's Office in other countries. The Presidency of the Government is staffed with political appointees and experts in various fields, including law, economics, public administration, foreign relations, and communications. These experts evaluate policy proposals from line ministries and ensure alignment with the broader government priorities.

The cabinet meets regularly to discuss and decide on draft bills after the Presidency of the Government has consulted with the relevant ministry. Although ministers sometimes continue the practice of submitting last-minute amendments during parliamentary debates, they must coordinate with the Presidency of the Government for significant amendments.

After a law is adopted, further coordination between the involved ministries is necessary for its implementation. Often, this requires the issuance of joint ministerial

ordinances (the “KYSA”), co-signed by two or more ministers. This process can sometimes lead to delays and implementation gaps, as it requires coordination among numerous officials to finalize the details of policy implementation.

Overall, however, established coordination mechanisms between the GO and line ministries are effective in enhancing policy coherence.

Citation:

The change in 2019 was effected by Law 4622/2019.

The website of the Presidency of the Government: <https://www.primeminister.gr/primeminister/proedria-tis-kivernisis>

## Hungary

### Score 8

The Orbán governments have steadily expanded the competencies and resources of both the Prime Minister’s Office and the Cabinet Office. The division of labor between the two offices, each led by a minister, is somewhat artificial. The Prime Minister’s Office is central to policy coordination, ensuring that policies align closely with the prime minister’s preferences and Fidesz’s ideological rhetoric. The Cabinet Office, headed by Antal Rogán, is primarily responsible for government coordination and communication, but its scope was extended after 2022 to oversee the secret services as well.

Under the Orbán governments, line ministries have mostly acted as executive agencies following priorities set by the core political executive. This represents a complete turnaround from most earlier governments in post-communist Hungary, when ministers functioned more as representatives of their ministries in the government than as representatives of the government in their ministries. Today, orders come from above, and ministerial activities are subject to detailed oversight by the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO). However, the pivotal role of the PMO has also made it a bottleneck in policymaking at times.

In this structure, the core executive may intervene in a ministry’s preparation of policy proposals at any time. As the Orbán V government increased the number of ministries, coordination functions shifted from within large ministries (Orbán IV) to the core executive, enhancing the need for broader coordination. Overall, the continuous growth of the core executive has been a feature of the informal presidentialization of the Hungarian government, in which the prime minister is the central political figure and the decision-maker of last resort. Aside from technical issues, coordination here is always a matter of command and control. Nevertheless, the cabinet holds weekly, biweekly and sometimes extraordinary meetings where ongoing policy issues are regularly discussed, with the participation of the prime minister and the ministers. These meetings are not public, but the most important decisions are announced through press conferences.

## Japan

Score 8

Until the 1990s, the personnel resources at the prime minister's disposal were considered insufficient, which was redressed by the administrative reforms implemented in 2001. The newly created Cabinet Office (Naikakufu) has the personnel and financial resources to effectively coordinate policy with the ministries. With a staff of more than 1,000, the Cabinet Secretariat is also well-equipped to provide administrative support to coordinate "important policies," which can now be imposed by the head of government in a top-down manner. Before the reform, the rule of dispersed management (*buntan kanri gensoku*), and prohibited the prime minister and the Cabinet Secretariat from initiating policies within the domains that fell under the jurisdiction of separate ministers. Moreover, new minister of state for special missions and prime ministerial special adviser posts were created, which allowed the head of government to entrust problems requiring interministerial coordination to direct subordinates. The coordination capacity of the Cabinet Office was also enhanced by the creation of advisory councils under the direct jurisdiction of the prime minister, which enabled some bureaucratic procedures to be circumvented. In particular, the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy took over a large part of the budget compilation process from the Ministry of Finance.

Until 2009, coordination on the most important policies between the cabinet and line ministries had been conducted through the Administrative Vice-Ministers' Council, which gathered on Mondays and Thursdays to establish a schedule for cabinet meetings on the following day. As that organ symbolized the bottom-up decision-making process led by the bureaucrats, it was abolished by the Democratic Party of Japan government in 2009. In 2012, the organ was revived as the Administrative Vice-Ministers' Liaison Council. It now gathers only after cabinet meetings on Fridays to discuss the implementation of cabinet decisions. This change symbolizes the significant centralization of the decision-making process under the Abe administration (2012 – 2020). Other important institutional changes include the creation of the National Security Council and the Cabinet Bureau of Personnel Affairs in 2014. The former organ facilitated interministerial coordination on security and foreign affairs, while the latter enabled the strategic promotion of high-ranking ministerial bureaucrats by the prime minister. These reforms contributed to making Cabinet Office civil servants more loyal to the prime minister and his or her closest advisors.

While the reforms implemented since 2001 have greatly increased the coordination capabilities of the organs under the prime minister's direct control, effective usage of the new institutional tools depends on the personal skills of the head of government and the chief cabinet secretary. Prime Minister Kishida Fumio has relied to a greater extent on traditional consensus-based decision-making patterns than his direct predecessors, which has sometimes caused confusion over the priorities of his cabinet.

## Citation:

Makihara, Izuru. 2009. "From a Clerk Room to Government Headquarters: The Cabinet Secretariat and Its 'Rotation System' in Transition, 1997 – 2007." In *Germany and Japan after 1989. Reform Pressures and Political System Dynamics*, eds. Roland Czada and Kenji Hirashima, Tōkyō Daigaku Shakai Kagaku Kenkyūjo Kenkyū Shirūzu, No. 33, Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shakai Kagaku Kenkyūjo.

Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet. 1947. "The Cabinet Law." [https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution\\_and\\_government\\_of\\_japan/cabinet\\_law\\_e.html](https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/cabinet_law_e.html)

Zakowski, Karol. 2021. *Gradual Institutional Change in Japan: Kantei Leadership under the Abe Administration*. London - New York: Routledge.

## Latvia

### Score 8

The State Chancellery plays a crucial role in coordinating policy proposals from various line ministries. This includes the substantive, legal, and technical preparation of cabinet meetings, as well as the review and legal analysis of policy-planning documents, legislative drafts, and reports submitted to the cabinet. Additionally, the Chancellery provides recommendations on the future direction of these projects (Valsts Kanceleja, 2023).

In 2022, the State Chancellery's primary role was to support the prime minister and the Cabinet of Ministers substantively and organizationally. There were 67 cabinet meetings, typically held weekly on Tuesdays in a hybrid format. Members of the cabinet were present in person, while state secretaries and experts joined remotely. Additionally, the prime minister convened extraordinary meetings to address urgent matters, conducted in person or through polls (Valsts Kanceleja, 2023).

Key measures introduced in 2022 to improve interministerial coordination and policy development include an Innovation Laboratory, training in innovation, and integrating the Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre into the State Chancellery. Efforts also focus on digital transformation, such as the TAP portal for efficient government operations, and reforms in the remuneration system, including new job classifications and salary scales. Furthermore, communication and digital skills in public administration are being enhanced, exemplified by the introduction of Zinta – the virtual assistant for public services (Valsts kanceleja, 2023).

In 2022, the State Chancellery of Latvia managed 46 regular and 21 extraordinary cabinet meetings, with 12 organized through polls. A total of 3,084 issues were discussed, with 1,745 as main agenda items and 1,339 as additional. There were 255 document evaluations from courts and other institutions requiring cabinet opinions. The prime minister received 106 recommendations on legislative direction, and 21 opinions were prepared on ministry-submitted legislative drafts. The State Chancellery also legally and editorially processed 2,401 legislative drafts. Additionally, 5,924 documents were reviewed, with 1,081 tasks assigned to the cabinet (Valsts kanceleja, 2023).

As mandated by the Cabinet of Ministers regulations, interministerial coordination groups must report their progress regularly. This includes submitting signed minutes from coordination group meetings to the involved ministries and directly to the Prime Minister's Office. This process ensures a formal and documented line of communication and accountability.

The prime minister may, by decree, establish a thematic committee of the Cabinet of Ministers to ensure systematic and planned work in a specific area and to coordinate and address various cross-cutting issues. These include the Thematic Committee on Digital Modernization, the Thematic Committee on European Union Funds, the Thematic Committee on Strategy Management, and the Thematic Committee on Energy, Environment, and Climate.

State secretary meetings are convened to address specific types of projects and issues. These include projects that lack agreement in the coordination process (excluding those needing political resolution or conceptual decisions), projects not refined as per earlier State secretary meeting decisions, national position project proposals, or related issues directed by the Senior Officials Meeting on EU Affairs, and official viewpoints of the Republic of Latvia for advocacy in international organizations, especially when there is a lack of consensus on ministry or institutional responsibilities. These weekly meetings, typically held on Thursdays and led by the director of the State Chancellery, also discuss other pertinent matters for state administration. The director of the State Chancellery and the state secretaries participate with voting rights.

However, there is no clear information about whether there are regular meetings between the GO/PMO, during which they receive briefings from line ministries on new developments that may impact policy proposal preparations, despite the official meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers, the cooperation meeting of parties forming the government, and state secretary meetings.

The number of meetings held and documents produced demonstrates an active and systematic approach to coordinating issues on the agenda. Additionally, the regularity of standard and poll-based meetings indicates effective ongoing communication and coordination between the GO/PMO and line ministries, which is essential for aligning policy proposals with governmental priorities.

Citation:

Valsts kanceleja. 2023. "Gada pārskats 2022. gads." <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/16278/download?attachment>  
Ministru kabinets. 2021. Ministru kabineta rīkojums Nr. 437 Par starpministriju darba grupas izveidi klimata politikas koordinācijai. <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/324318-par-starpministriju-darba-grupas-izveidi-klimata-politikas-koordinacijai>

## Lithuania

### Score 8

The prime minister's office has the capacity to evaluate policy proposals from line ministries and assess their alignment with the government's priorities. The government office effectively monitors policy proposals and their implementation through several channels. First, it administratively tracks the execution of government actions assigned to different ministries and other state institutions. Second, through its information system of monitoring, it assesses the achievement of government priorities and linked policy objectives based on performance indicators. Progress in policy implementation is discussed during cabinet meetings and other government-level deliberations.

Information derived from the monitoring process is infrequently used to propose corrective action when progress is deemed insufficient. Thus, the monitoring process does not always prevent the prioritization of sectoral or bureaucratic interests over full-government and horizontal interests in policy implementation. In one EU-funded project, the government office reviewed monitoring and evaluation practices and made several recommendations to improve performance measurement in line ministries, including the development of key performance indicators or indicator libraries in various policy areas. Despite the implementation of this project, the National Audit Office stated that the country's monitoring and reporting system continues to lack quality information. Additionally, the government and line ministries often provide incomplete information regarding the achievement of their policy aims and objectives in their reports.

The coalition government, formed in late 2020, strengthened the monitoring of policy proposals from the line ministries by introducing questionnaires to check the alignment of their content with government priorities and their potential impact. The chancellor and advisers to the prime minister play important roles in coordinating policy processes with the line ministries.

## New Zealand

### Score 8

In New Zealand, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) plays a crucial role in ensuring that the prime minister and cabinet have access to the information and support necessary for effective decision-making and governance. The DPMC acts as a central hub for coordinating government policies and initiatives, maintaining the machinery of government, and supporting the overall functioning of the executive branch.

In 2023, the DPMC consisted of nine units: the National Security Group, Government House, the Policy Advisory Group, Strategy Governance and Engagement, the Cabinet Office, the Cyclone Recovery Unit, Child Wellbeing and

Poverty Reduction, the COVID-19 RCOI Coordination Unit, and the Implementation Unit. The Policy Advisory Group currently consists of 32 staff members covering a broad spectrum of policy expertise (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2023). They are in constant contact with the prime minister, and provide advice on all cabinet and cabinet committee papers. They also engage in coordinating interministerial cooperation.

The DPMC typically engages in major policy initiatives or those with cross-cutting implications across various sectors. This involvement goes beyond legal and technical aspects to include broader programmatic elements, ensuring alignment with government priorities. Regular meetings between the DPMC and line ministries occur to different extents, depending on the demands deriving from policy developments, government priorities and specific initiatives. However, there is some concern that recent crisis management efforts by the DPMC have led to an increasing centralization of decision-making, which in turn risks becoming disconnected from external advice (Harman 2023).

Citation:

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. 2023. "Annual Report / Pūrongo-ā-tau." <https://www.dPMC.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2023-11/dPMC-annual-report-2023-v2.pdf>

Harman, R. 2023. "What's Wrong with the Public Service." <https://www.politik.co.nz/whats-wrong-with-the-public-service>

## Norway

Score 8

The office of the prime minister (PMO) in Norway is small in size compared to the line ministries. Of a total of 4,500 employees in the ministries, only 190 work at the PMO. The formal task of coordinating policy proposals from the line ministries lies with the Ministry of Finance (MoF). Because most policy proposals have fiscal implications, the MoF must consent to any new policy that results in rising public expenditures. However, if new policies can be financed within existing budgetary constraints, the MoF typically does not interfere. Most formal coordination takes place as an integrated part of working on the annual state budget, with two regular conferences: one in March and one in August, before the budget proposal is sent to parliament in mid-October. Coordination of new policy proposals is systematic but informal, occurring through two mechanisms.

The first mechanism is the formation of coalition governments. Executive power requires a parliamentary majority and, given the existing party structure and the actual distribution of votes, all governments must be coalitions of two or more parties. To form a stable coalition government, the participating parties negotiate a common policy program. Even in cases of a one-party minority government, clarifications with supporting parties take place before presenting a parliamentary program. This process of producing a program effectively has a significant coordination impact.

The second mechanism of coordination is the frequent use of ad hoc collaboration between junior ministers. If a policy problem or proposal cuts across conventional lines of sectoral responsibilities, the coordination challenge is handled by junior ministers from each of the involved ministries.

Implementation of the UN SDGs and efforts toward sustainable development challenge the bureaucracy in new ways. Norway's 2021 SDG Action Plan recommends using the OECD framework for policy coherence for sustainable development. However, implementing this framework is not straightforward in all countries (Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, 2021). Moreover, action plans do not always lead to behavioral change (Stave 2022). Proposed tools for increasing policy coherence include systematic environmental impact assessments (EIAs) and new indicators for policy coherence as an independent target (OECD, 2023).

Citation:

Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation. 2021. "White Paper no. 40 (2020-2021). Meaningful Goals. Norway's Action Plan to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030." <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/bcbcac3469db4bb9913661ee39e58d6d/no/pdfs/stm202020210040000dddpdfs.pdf>

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Stave S.E. 2022. Handling med mening. Verktøy for en mer samstemt politikk. for bærekraftig utvikling. Fafo-notat 2022:03. <https://www.fafo.no/images/pub/2022/10364.pdf>

## Slovenia

### Score 8

The Prime Minister's Office handles the coordination, organization, professional, and administrative tasks for the Prime Minister. Its responsibilities include preparing expert opinions to inform the prime minister's decisions and actions in managing and directing government work, as well as coordinating the ministries in implementing the government's political and administrative measures. The office also oversees the implementation of binding instructions issued by the prime minister to the ministers, which are crucial for the work of individual ministries. Additionally, the office is responsible for interdepartmental cooperation on matters involving multiple ministries.

Structurally, the office consists of nine experts, the Head of the Office, and eight State Secretaries. The State Secretaries are responsible for relations with the National Assembly, European affairs, culture, and international affairs. They also develop dialogue with civil society, coordinate citizens' initiatives, manage intergenerational dialogue and housing policy, oversee strategic communication, and handle the national nuclear program. Women are strongly represented in the current cabinet, alongside three male State Secretaries.

The government operates and makes decisions through regular and correspondence meetings, typically convened by the prime minister on Thursdays. In the prime minister's absence, the deputy prime minister or a minister appointed by the prime minister chairs the meetings. The government also reviews materials finalized in meetings of its working bodies.

As with previous administrations, there are currently three working bodies: the Committee of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for State and Public Affairs, the Committee of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Economic Affairs, and the Commission of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Administrative and Personnel Affairs. These working bodies meet weekly and consist of the president, the deputy president, and a sufficient number of members appointed by the government. Decisions are made by a majority vote of the members present.

Each working body issues a brief report on the government material discussed at its meetings. Once a working body has given final consideration to a matter, the decision is issued as a government decision.

The State Administration Act defines the relationship between the government and its ministries. Ministries must follow the political guidelines of the government. The government may instruct a ministry to investigate a particular issue, fulfill a specific task, and report back. However, the Prime Minister's Office is not directly involved in the policies proposed by the ministries, which remain the responsibility of the respective ministries.

Citation:

Republic of Slovenia. 2024. "Office of the Prime Minister." <https://www.gov.si/en/state-authorities/government-offices/office-of-the-prime-minister>

Republic of Slovenia. 2024. "Secretariat – General of the Government." <https://www.gov.si/drzavni-organi/vladne-službe/generalni-sekretariat-vlade/>

Republika Slovenija. 2024. "Dnevni redi delovnih teles vlade." <https://www.gov.si/drzavni-organi/vlada/seje-vlade/dnevni-redi-delovnih-teles-vlade/>

## Spain

Score 8

Spain's Government Office (Ministry of the Presidency) and Prime Minister's Office (Gabinete) play crucial roles in evaluating proposals from line ministries, focusing on political, strategic, and technical aspects. The Government Office typically handles drafting and technical issues, while the Prime Minister's Office concentrates on political and strategic considerations. This institutionalized process occurs weekly, with representatives from all ministries meeting at the cabinet meeting preparatory committee. Advisers from the Prime Minister's Office also participate in this committee and in the specialized ministerial committee on economic affairs, which assists the Council of Ministers (see "Cabinet Committees").

The Prime Minister's Office is structured somewhat to reflect various ministerial portfolios but lacks comprehensive policy expertise for thorough executive oversight. The Government Office, which organizes Council of Ministers' sessions and is headed by the minister of the presidency, evaluates the substantive content of draft bills to some extent, despite lacking sectoral policy expertise. Ministries are expected to involve the Prime Minister's Office informally in preparing policy proposals. Although these ministries are formally autonomous, the legal and political hierarchy within the government facilitates and encourages this consultation pattern with the prime minister's team.

The Annual Regulatory Plan of the General State Administration outlines the legislative or regulatory initiatives that various ministerial departments plan to submit each calendar year to the Council of Ministers for approval.

Two powerful ministerial committees prepare cabinet meetings in Spain: the Committee for Economic Affairs and the Committee of Undersecretaries and Secretaries of State. The Committee for Economic Affairs reviews and schedules economic or budgetary interministerial coordination. The Committee of Undersecretaries and Secretaries of State filters and settles issues before cabinet meetings, preparing the Council of Ministers' weekly sessions held every Tuesday. The minister of the presidency chairs this committee.

To implement the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP), existing departments have been assigned new responsibilities. For example, the Economic Office of the Prime Minister serves as a monitoring unit, the Ministry of Finance's department for EU funds acts as the managing unit, and the General Intervention Board of the State Administration functions as an oversight and audit unit.

During 2022–2023, the lack of experience in managing coalition governments and partisan differences impacted the effectiveness and coherence of policy formulation, leading to coordination problems among line ministries. To streamline consultation, the Prime Minister's Office increased personnel and financial resources to evaluate line ministries' policy proposals.

Citation:

Royal Decree 890/2023 of 27 November, approving the structure of the Presidency of the Government

## Sweden

Score 8

Policymaking in Sweden is characterized by a small government and numerous autonomous public agencies. The central administrative entity, known as Government Offices (Regeringskansliet), is led by the prime minister and has a small staff that assists the government (Regeringen) in preparing policy and governing the country. This entity comprises the Office of the Prime Minister (Statsrådsberedningen) and all the ministries.

The GO employs a very small fraction of the public servants working for more than 300 government agencies. Furthermore, Sweden is characterized by the absence of formal ministerial rule when it comes to public agencies. This means that, even though agencies belong to a specific ministry, public agencies and civil servants have considerable freedom in interpreting laws or exercising public authority (Larsson and Bäck 2008). Ministries focus on strategic planning and budgeting, and the managerial autonomy of agencies has increased in the past decades (Hall 2016).

The leadership of the GO and the PMO is asserted when policies are initiated, when final decisions are made, and if a disagreement emerges among the governing parties or ministers, rather than as a continuous monitoring of policy implementation work. Regular briefings and informal consultations occur frequently. This informal coordination procedure nevertheless ensures that the PMO, in line with the finance ministry, plays a crucial role in policy developments. As is the case in many aspects of Swedish politics, there are established yet informal rules regulating procedures when there is disagreement among non-political advisers on how to design policy. The practicalities of policy design are left to specialist public servants, whereas the GO and the PMO operate at the strategic level.

Finally, line ministries often seek advice from executive agencies during the early stages of the policy process because these public agencies possess the necessary expertise in the policy sector (Jacobsson, Pierre, and Sundström, 2015; Niemann, 2012; Page, 2012; Premfors and Sundström, 2007).

Citation:

Hall, P. 2016. "The Swedish Administrative Model." In *The Oxford Handbook of Swedish Politics*, ed. Jon Pierre, 299-314. Oxford: OUP.

Jacobsson, B., Pierre, J., and Sundström, G. 2015. *Governing the Embedded State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Niemann, C. 2013. *Villkorat Förtroende. Normer och Rollförväntningar i Relationen Mellan Politiker och Tjänstemän i Regeringskansliet*. Stockholm: Department of Political Science, University of Stockholm.

Page, E.C. 2012. *Policy Without Politicians: Bureaucratic Influence in Comparative Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Premfors, R. and Sundström, G. 2007. *Regeringskansliet*. Stockholm: Liber.

## Switzerland

Score 8

The Swiss political system does not have a prime minister or a prime minister's office. The government, called the Federal Council, is a collegial body composed of seven ministries, each of which has a broad area of competency and is responsible for a large variety of issues. There are no line ministries. However, there are federal offices and institutions connected to the various ministries. These work closely with the minister responsible for their group. Every minister is in a sense a "ministerial committee," representing the coordination of their numerous cooperating ministerial units.

Since ministers must achieve a large Federal Council majority in order to win support for a proposal, there is also a strong coordination between ministries. There are several instruments of interministerial coordination, as well as various mechanisms by which ministries' draft bills are evaluated. The ministries, called federal departments, engage in a formal process of consultation when drafting proposals, the Department of Justice provides legal evaluations of draft bills, and the Federal Chancellery and Federal Council provide political coordination. In particular, the Federal Chancellery has gained a reputation as the central institution for interministerial planning (Vatter 2020: Chapter 7).

More precisely, there is first a preliminary procedure of interministerial consultations at the level of the federal departments. After the departments have been consulted, the co-reporting procedure begins. This instrument is specifically designed to coordinate policy proposals between the ministries. This process invites the ministries to take positions on political issues. The Federal Chancellery leads the process by submitting the proposal under consideration as prepared by the ministry responsible to all other ministries. These then have the opportunity to submit a report or express an opinion. A process of discussion and coordination ensues, designed to eliminate all or most differences before the proposal is discussed by the Federal Council. The co-reporting procedure is largely a process of negative coordination that highlights incompatibilities with other policies but does not systematically scrutinize the potential for synergy. Policy coordination and policy integration could thus be strengthened (Trein/Maggetti 2019).

There is a tension, however, between the consensus principle in the Federal Council that demands a common solution supported by all seven ministers, and the departmental principle that enables ministers to pursue their party line within their departments, which in turn allows them to satisfy party members as they secure support for consensus-derived government solutions. Increasing polarization in parliament has strengthened the departmental principle and rendered consensus-driven solutions within the Federal Council more difficult to achieve. Nonetheless, the Federal Council has to date managed to balance the two principles (Sager and Vatter 2019). However, the need to secure a substantial level of consensus within Switzerland's nonadversarial system accounts for the slow and incremental nature of policy change, which can be an obstacle to ambitious reforms aimed at sustainability.

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Vatter, A. 2020. *Der Bundesrat. Die Schweizer Regierung*. Zürich: NZZ Libro.

## Estonia

### Score 7

Estonia typically has coalition governments; reaching an agreement on the priorities and goals of the future government is a core issue in the cabinet formation process. After a coalition cabinet is sworn in, it generally acts in accordance with the government program and rules of procedure signed by all coalition partners. The process of program implementation is coordinated by the coalition committee, which is composed of a representative from each coalition partner. The Basic Principles of the Government Coalition for 2023 – 2027 are stipulated in the coalition agreement, reached in April 2023. The objectives set out in the agreement will serve as the basis for the government in drafting its four-year plan of action. Defense and security are among the top priorities for the new government, along with ensuring the sustainability of public financing, implementing green reforms, reducing regional stagnation and inequality, and guaranteeing high-quality education.

Strategic meetings between the prime minister and line ministers take place annually to steer the strategic goals of Estonia 2035. The strategy, adopted in 2021, establishes a framework consolidating Estonia's major strategic goals and national courses of action while taking into account international obligations.

Estonia 2035 serves as a crucial instrument for the country's long-term development strategy and cross-sectoral coordination. All development plans approved by the government and all programs approved by the ministers adhere to the goals and necessary changes outlined in the Estonia 2035 strategy. Estonia 2035 is also closely linked to the state budget strategy process.

Primary responsibility for coordinating, implementing and monitoring Estonia 2035 lies with the Strategy Unit of the Government Office (GO). This unit drafts strategic development plans and government action plans and monitors the implementation of these policy documents. In addition to the GO, there is the Prime Minister's Bureau, which is composed of experts in various policy areas who advise the prime minister. Unlike the GO, this body is mostly linked to the prime minister's political party, and its members change with each new prime minister.

## Germany

### Score 7

Germany has a high level of intergovernmental communication, especially between the Federal Chancellery and the line ministries. This does not always lead to successful cooperation between the units. While the chancellor gives guidelines and direction to foster coherent policymaking across the line ministries, inter-party conflict – typical for German coalition governments and heightened under the current “Traffic Light Coalition” – still occasionally leads to intergovernmental

tensions. However, formal and informal mechanisms of coordination often successfully calm or fully prevent outright conflict.

Coordination mechanisms between the German Federal Chancellery and the line ministries exist and are frequently used for both formal and informal coordination. The German Federal Chancellery employs around 620 staff members. Its policy units assess, filter, and analyze policies and current developments, supporting the German Chancellor (Olaf Scholz). Some of these units, known as “Spiegelreferate,” mirror the responsibilities of each line ministry in the chancellery and facilitate policy work in these areas (Busse and Hofmann, 2019).

The design and preparation of bills and policy proposals, following the “Ressortprinzip,” is largely the prerogative of the line ministries, while the chancellor should provide direction and priorities (“Richtlinienprinzip”).

Line ministries typically share policy proposals with officials from the chancellery before introducing them in the federal cabinet, where the chancellor must ultimately sign off on them. This process aligns priorities. Conflicts are often resolved in the weekly meetings between the head of the chancellery and the state secretaries. However, this mechanism frequently reaches its limits when coalition parties publicize their differences and seek to gain an advantage in political competition.

Weekly meetings occur between line ministries and the chancellery at various levels. These include meetings between the chief of the chancellery and the state secretaries, as well as lower-level meetings within interministerial working groups that include the chancellery.

During the observation period, conflicts between coalition partners emerged on almost all relevant issues, from support for Ukraine to the budget, from welfare programs for less wealthy families to energy policy. The chancellery was rarely able to mitigate these conflicts (see Zohlnhöfer and Engler 2024).

Citation:

Busse, V., Hofmann, H. 2019. Bundeskanzleramt und Bundesregierung. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft.  
Digitalcheck. 2023. “Bundesministerium für Justiz.” [www.normenkontrollrat.bund.de/Webs/NKR/DE/weniger-buerokratie-und-besseres-recht/digitalcheck/digitalcheck.html](http://www.normenkontrollrat.bund.de/Webs/NKR/DE/weniger-buerokratie-und-besseres-recht/digitalcheck/digitalcheck.html)  
Zohlnhöfer, Reimut, and Fabian Engler. 2024. “Fortschritt gewagt – und wie weit gekommen? Eine Halbzeitbilanz der Ampel-Koalition unter Olaf Scholz.” *Gesellschaft. Wirtschaft. Politik* 73(1): 55-67. <https://doi.org/10.10.3224/gwp.v73i1.07>

## Italy

Score 7

The administrative structure of the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers is complex and intricate. As of 2024, it comprises 18 departments responsible for various functional areas, ranging from equal opportunity policies to civil protection coordination, and from European policy coordination to anti-drug policies. Additionally, 10 support offices provide coordination functions, general political direction, and technical-managerial support to the president. There are also seven ad

hoc units established by the Premier through a special mission structure to perform specific tasks or implement specific programs. The duration of these structures, specified in the establishing act, does not exceed that of the government that established them. This organizational structure employs approximately 2,000 permanent employees as of 2018, according to the latest official data.

This organizational structure is further supported by the direct collaboration offices of ministers without portfolio, who coordinate the main PMO departments. The number of these offices varies depending on the president of the Council.

Over the past 30 years, since the crisis of the First Republic, two significant characteristics have emerged in decision-making coordination processes. Firstly, the role of the prime minister has become more influential, enhancing the political coordination capabilities of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). Concurrently, the State General Accounting Office, part of the Ministry of the Treasury, has grown in importance and plays a crucial role in every decision with significant spending implications. The State General Accounting Office is considered one of the most competent administrations, with strong technical and analytical capabilities. In contrast, the PMO is characterized by a more diverse range of technical and analytical capabilities that are primarily based on a legal background.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is regularly kept informed about policy proposals generated by line ministries. For proposals of particular political relevance to the government, the consultation process begins at the early stages of drafting and is more comprehensive, involving not only formal but also substantive issues. In fields less directly connected with the main missions of the government, exchanges are less intensive.

The process of co-drafting ministerial policies was strongly reinforced under the Draghi government due to the prime minister's individual leadership. However, the Draghi government assigned the responsibility for coordinating and governing the policies for implementing the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) to the Ministry of the Treasury, considering it more technically equipped for this task. The Meloni government followed a similar approach, emphasizing strong political coordination of ministerial policies but transferring responsibility for the NRRP from the Treasury to the PMO under the direct oversight of the prime minister. The effects of this decision are not yet evident; however, it is suggested that it may render the NRRP implementation process less efficient due to the PMO's limited technical and analytical capacities.

In summary, there is a trend toward vertical policy coordination, driven primarily by political factors. The bureaucratic aspect of coordination is less prominent. When there is no political focus on particular policies or programs, coordination tends to be weak, as the bureaucracy responds only reactively.

Citation:  
on the organization and the staff of the PMO:

<https://www.governo.it/it/organizzazione/uffici-dipartimenti-strutture/69>

<https://presidenza.governo.it/amministrazionetrasparente/personale/index.html>

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## Poland

### Score 7

In Poland, the prime minister's office or Chancellery (Kancelaria Prezesa Rady Ministrów) typically evaluates policy proposals using a team of experts and advisers. The specifics of this group's capacities, including personnel and financial resources, depend on budget allocations and government priorities.

Under Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, the office exerted centralized control over proposals prepared by line ministers, reflecting a broader trend toward bureaucratic centralization. Line ministries were required to involve the Chancellery in the preparation of policy proposals. The degree of involvement varied, but often included legal and technical assessments and consideration of programmatic aspects so as to ensure alignment with government priorities. These priorities were frequently coordinated by Jarosław Kaczyński, the head of the PiS party, rather than by Prime Minister Morawiecki. This was partly due to ongoing tension between Morawiecki and Minister of Justice Zbigniew Ziobro.

Under the PiS government, the office consisted of various departments, but the crucial ones were the Government Work Programming Department and the Legislative Process Coordination Department. Regular meetings between the Chancellery and line ministries were common. These meetings served as a platform for briefings, updates and discussions on new developments that might impact policy proposal preparations. The frequency and depth of these interactions changed based on the nature and urgency of policy matters.

The budget of Prime Minister Morawiecki's Chancellery grew immensely over the years. In 2021 – 2022, it increased from PLN 379.7 million to PLN 843.3 million, then doubled to PLN 1.54 billion. In 2024, it was planned to reach PLN 2 billion, which is 16 times more than the expenditures during the rule of the PO-PSL coalition in 2015 (Rzeczpospolita 2023).

Citation:

Rzeczpospolita. 2023. "U premiera Morawieckiego na bogato. Budżet jego kancelarii przebił sufit." <https://www.rp.pl/polityka/art39225341-u-premiera-morawieckiego-na-bogato-budzet-jego-kancelarii-przebil-sufit>

## Portugal

### Score 7

Effective coordination within a government necessitates a degree of organic stability. Since its inauguration in March 2022, the XXIII Constitutional Government of Portugal, with an absolute majority from the Socialist Party, has experienced this firsthand. Its organizational framework was established in May 2022, as per Decreto Lei 32/2022. Despite some minor crises leading to changes in ministerial and secretarial positions in September 2022 (Decreto Lei 65/2022), January 2023 (Decreto Lei 7/2023), February 2023 (Decreto Lei 17/2023), and November 2023 (Decreto Lei 108-A/2023), the core government structure has remained relatively stable. This core includes the prime minister, the Prime Minister's Office, and the prime minister's secretaries of state for digitalization and administrative modernization and for European affairs, as well as the minister of the presidency of the Council of Ministers along with their secretaries of state for planning and for public administration. Notably, the secretaries of state under the prime minister and the minister of the presidency are most effective at ensuring cross-governmental coordination, particularly in areas like digitalization and public administration reform.

Formally, two collegiate bodies facilitate government coordination: the Council of Ministers and the regular meetings of the secretaries of state from various ministries. These weekly meetings, attended by a representative from each ministry, are crucial for aligning policies before they are submitted to the Council of Ministers.

Line ministers typically forward their legislative proposals to the minister of the presidency, followed by bilateral discussions to refine the proposals. These are then forwarded for approval in the Council of Ministers and, if necessary, to parliament.

Unlike regular briefings from line ministries, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) consistently receives updates on new developments that could influence the preparation of policy proposals.

In accordance with Decree-Law 21/2021, the establishment of the Public Administration's Planning, Policy, and Foresight Competence Centre (PlanAPP) is integral for high-quality public action. PlanAPP's mission is to align sectoral strategic planning with national plans through a cooperative network that shares knowledge, thereby enhancing policy coherence.

The prominence of the Ministry of Finance in the government structure is a testament to its pivotal role in addressing key issues such as economic growth, inflation, and fiscal sustainability.

Citation:

Decreto-Lei no. 32/2022. Diário da República. <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/decreto-lei/32-2022-183159328>

Decreto-Lei no. 65/2022. <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/decreto-lei/65-2022-201509739>

Decreto no. 7/2023. Diário da República. <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/decreto/7-2023-213345453>

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Decreto-Lei no. 108-A/2023. Diário da República. <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/decreto-lei/108-a-2023-224661323>

Decreto-Lei no. 21/2021. Diário da República. <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/decreto-lei/21-2021-159432384>

## United Kingdom

### Score 7

Although the prime minister holds a very powerful position in the UK system, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is relatively limited in its scope. In practice, the Cabinet Office fulfills this central role, coordinating effectively with teams for each line ministry. Additionally, the Treasury extends its remit beyond budgeting, providing a secondary coordination mechanism. However, the effectiveness of this coordination is sometimes called into question. The public inquiry into the governance of the pandemic, although not yet complete, is revealing significant incoherence at the heart of government. UK policy studies often describe this issue with phrases such as “incoherent state” (Richards et al. 2022) to indicate the lack of coordinated action within the government and across the public sector (summarized in Cairney and Kippin 2024). While the prime minister has considerable power to set specific priorities, this power does not extend to overall policy coordination.

Citation:

Richards, D., Warner, S., Smith, M.J., and Coyle, D. 2022. “Crisis and state.” transformation: Covid-19, levelling up and the UK's incoherent state, Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society, 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsac038>

Cairney, P., and S. Kippin. 2024. *Politics and Policymaking in the UK*. Bristol: BUP.

## Austria

### Score 6

The Federal Chancellery can be considered the functional center within the Austrian political executive, responsible for coordinating the government's various activities. However, it lacks the specialized personnel to function as a comprehensive strategy unit and has no authority to issue instructions to other ministries. The Chancellor's Office focuses on coordinating line ministries' activities rather than monitoring them, thus possessing limited capacity to evaluate the policy content of line ministry proposals against the government's priorities.

Ultimately, these limitations are more political or constitutional than administrative. First, the federal chancellor, who chairs the cabinet, is only the first among equals (Binder 2016). He or she has no formal authority over the other members of the council (Müller 2003). Second, with the exception of the years between 1966 and 1983, Austria has been governed by coalitions since 1945. This further reduces the authority of the head of government, as another key member of the government – the vice-chancellor – is usually the leader of another coalition party. The result is a

significant division, or indeed fragmentation, of strategic capacities. Responsibility within the government is distributed among highly autonomous ministers and among political parties that are closely linked by a coalition agreement but compete for votes independently. The Chancellor's Office's coordinative roles include overseeing the implementation of the coalition agreement.

The Federal Chancellery has a department called the Legal and Constitutional Service (Verfassungsdienst), which is responsible for checking the constitutionality of policy proposals from various ministries, rather than providing functional coordination.

Chancellor Sebastian Kurz (2017 – 2019; 2019 – 2021) introduced several major reforms to enhance the chancellery's functional strategic potential as the government's central hub. However, most changes concerned the public relations and outreach functions of the chancellery rather than the relations between the chancellery and individual government departments, with the exception of political communication issues. Possibly more important in terms of policy-related strategy was a newly formed strategic unit or think tank called "Think Austria." This unit was, however, dissolved under Chancellor Nehammer (in office since late 2021) (Der Standard 2022).

Nehammer added several senior positions to his staff (to serve from 2024). However, it is unclear to what extent this step was motivated by a desire to strengthen the coordination capacities of the chancellery. The opposition criticized Nehammer, suggesting he was instead making "reward appointments" for loyal supporters (Der Standard, 31 October 2023).

Citation:

[https://www.parlament.gv.at/aktuelles/pk/jahr\\_2018/pk0401](https://www.parlament.gv.at/aktuelles/pk/jahr_2018/pk0401)

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<https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000193273/spoe-kritisiert-neue-top-jobs-im-kanzleramt>

Der Standard. 2022. "Nehammer löste Kurz' umstrittenen Thinktank auf." Available at <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000133232281/nehammer-loeste-kurz-umstrittenen-think-tank-auf>

[https://www.kleinezeitung.at/politik/innenpolitik/6048669/Neustart-gefordert\\_80-Medienleute-im-Kanzleramt-aber-immer-weniger](https://www.kleinezeitung.at/politik/innenpolitik/6048669/Neustart-gefordert_80-Medienleute-im-Kanzleramt-aber-immer-weniger)

## Ireland

Score 6

Interministerial coordination in Ireland falls under the remit of the Prime Minister's Office, the Department of the Taoiseach (DoT). Established in 1977 with around 30 staff, the office has now grown to more than 240 employees. The Taoiseach's office

deals with both legislative and expenditure proposals, focusing on delivering the program for government. It liaises with the president and both houses of the Oireachtas (parliament) through the Parliamentary Liaison Unit and coordinates legislative and expenditure proposals with other departmental ministries and the Office of the Attorney General. Coordination between various departments is primarily achieved through the cabinet committee structure, managed by the cabinet committee for interministerial coordination.

Parliamentary committees – Standing, Joint, Select and Special – can be either departmental (shadowing governmental departments) or thematic (e.g., European affairs or public petitions), such as the Committee of Public Accounts or the Committee of Budgetary Oversight. These committees are essential for oversight, providing a point of contact for submissions of proposals and evidence, and facilitating discussions where stakeholders are invited. Despite improvements in oversight and resourcing, significant challenges to policy coherence remain in Irish policymaking for sustainable development and climate action. These challenges involve complexity across adjacent systems, requiring strong thematic integration across policy silos, which is critical for effective policy coherence in Ireland’s horizontal coordination (Torney and O’Mahony, 2023). Irish policy for sustainable development and climate action is widely recognized as being strongly siloed, exacerbated by the problem of “silos within silos” (Torney and O’Mahony 2023; Flynn and Ó hUiginn 2019; Banerjee et al., 2020; EPA 2020; Mullally and Dunphy 2015).

Citation:

House Of the Oireachtas. 2023. “About Committees.” <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/committees/about-committees/>  
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## Netherlands

Score 6

The Dutch prime minister is formally responsible for coordinating government policy as a whole, and possesses a range of powers. These include deciding on the agenda and formulating conclusions and decisions for the Council of Ministers, chairing its meetings and committees, adjudicating interdepartmental conflicts, serving as the primary press spokesperson, speaking in the States General, and representing the Netherlands in international forums such as the European Union and the United Nations. The prime minister also oversees all affairs concerning the Royal House.

The prime minister's Ministry of General Affairs includes 10-12 advising councilors (raadadviseurs, with junior assistants) who are top-level civil servants rather than political appointees. These councilors serve as secretaries of the cabinet sub-councils and committees, controlling the flow of information to the prime minister. Additionally, the prime minister maintains a special relationship with the Scientific Council for Government Policy. Directors of planning agencies and permanent knowledge institutes sometimes act as secretaries for interdepartmental "front gates." Despite these resources, the Prime Minister's Office has a limited capacity to evaluate the policy content of proposals from line ministries unless they openly conflict with the government platform (regeerakkoord). Prime Minister Rutte's style reportedly allowed sectoral ministers considerable scope for action, reflecting the small size of the Prime Minister's Office:

Line ministries typically involve the prime minister in the development of legislation, and coalition formations formally end with a constitutive meeting at which all ministers sign the coalition agreement and take joint responsibility for its implementation. To promote unity in spokespersonship among ministers, a set of principles for the cabinet's communication policy has been developed. The prime minister is the primary spokesperson for the cabinet, especially on unresolved issues and those requiring collective political support.

Briefings between the prime minister and line ministries occur during weekly Council of Ministers meetings, usually held on Fridays at the Ministry of General Affairs. Additional meetings can be convened whenever the prime minister or at least two other ministers deem it necessary. For efficient decision-making, proposals for the cabinet are first submitted to a sub-council. The prime minister chairs all sub-councils and ministerial committees, each with a fixed composition of ministers and state secretaries.

This meticulous coordination mechanism relies on the political willingness to cooperate and mutual trust. In the Rutte IV cabinet, both factors were missing from the start. The prime minister's involvement in the childcare benefit affair resulted in distrust and resistance to his leadership. Additionally, the VVD and Christian Democrats did not trust their D66 and Christian Union coalition partners, perceiving them as being too proactive in climate change, circular economy transition and nitrogen reduction policies, while migration policy also remained a significant point of contention. After less than two years, the prime minister deliberately violated coalition conduct rules by threatening a coalition break and calling for an open vote in a plenary Council of Ministers meeting, leading to the government's collapse.

Citation:

G. Buitendijk, Secretaris-Generaal. n.d. Introductiedossier. Kennismaking met de organisatie van AZ.

Bekkers. 2021. "Algemene Zaken, de kleine spin in het web." Binnenlands Bestuur, March 30.

Joustra, T., and P. Van Venetiç. 1993. De geheimen van het torentje. Praktische gids voor het premierschap.

NRC. 2023. "De gang van zaken van de afgelopen dagen kan op het Binnenhof diepe sporen nalaten." NRC, July 8.

## United States

### Score 6

The closest comparison to a government office or prime minister's office in the U.S. system is the White House staff, along with other units of the Executive Office of the President (e.g., the Council of Economic Advisers, the Office of Management and Budget, and the National Security Council).

In the U.S. system, coordination involves how the executive departments and agencies engage the president and the White House staff in their work. Long-established practice, however, shows that the president and the White House staff are dominant within the executive branch, allowing them to prioritize issues that align with the president's agenda. During the Trump administration, agency policy development was heavily influenced by Trump's desire to cut regulations and reverse actions taken by the Obama administration, with little focus on long-term agency missions or priorities. Upon entering the White House, President Biden took steps to rebuild federal departments and agencies by hiring a large number of senior officials to address the "talent exodus" (Zhao and Lippman, 2021) that occurred during the Trump years.

## Israel

### Score 5

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is responsible for coordinating between departments, monitoring and coordinating the preparation of annual plans, and overseeing the implementation of cabinet decisions (Galnoor 2010). The general director of the PMO chairs many of the interministerial committees aimed at developing and implementing interministerial programs.

Ministers do not need to obtain consent from the PMO for their proposals. However, if they want to introduce a cabinet decision, the prime minister must agree to place the decision on the cabinet's agenda. The PMO does not hold meetings with ministers to hear about their proposals. The PMO can receive information on proposals either when they are introduced to the cabinet or if they pertain to committees chaired by the PMO general director. Otherwise, ministers are not required to submit their plans to the PMO.

The PMO has several departments responsible for coordination and planning. Until recently, the PMO was seen by the line ministries as a powerful entity capable of promoting interministerial projects. However, over the past two years, many officials in the PMO have either left or been replaced by individuals who are less professional and more partisan. Additionally, the general director of the PMO – the person responsible for coordinating all the ministries – is currently a loyalist who lacks the necessary skills and experience for the position, especially when compared to

previous general directors. As a result, the PMO has become weaker. This was evident following October 7, as the government failed to respond to mounting social and economic needs, and coordinate between government departments.

At the same time, the void left by the absence of a powerful PMO has been filled by the Ministry of Finance. Almost all proposals need to be reviewed by the Ministry of Finance. The ministry often uses its power to modify proposals even if they do not have financial implications. In addition, the ministry often drafts many of the ministerial legislative proposals as part of the Arrangements Law introduced with the annual budget (Kosti 2021). Hence, for line ministers to promote their policies, they often need the approval of the Ministry of Finance.

Citation:

Galnoor, I. 2010. *Public Management in Israel*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203844960>

Kosti, N. 2021. "Centralization via Delegation: The Long-Term Implications of the Israeli Arrangements Laws." In I. Bar-Siman-Tov, eds., *Comparative Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Omnibus Legislation 8: 73–94*. Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-72748-2\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-72748-2_4)

## Slovakia

### Score 3

The European Semester 2022 country report on Slovakia is critical of horizontal coordination (European Commission, 2022: 9): "The low capacity of the public administration is a serious bottleneck for investments and reforms. The lack of human resource management, effective governance, and coordination across areas such as administration, justice, services to people and businesses, and research and innovation often results in delayed or only partial implementation of reforms. The limited capacity of the Government Office to evaluate policy proposals from line ministries and to ensure they are aligned with the government's overall priorities is one of the reasons for such evaluation."

The specialized body within the Government Office regularly involved in assessing government-sponsored draft bills is the Legislative Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic. The statute of this council defines its main responsibilities as follows:

- Coordinating and directing the activities of ministries and other central state bodies; reporting on the preparation of draft laws and government regulations.
- Discussing and assessing drafts of constitutional laws, laws, government regulations, proposals, legislative intentions, and parliamentary bills when the chairman of the Slovak National Council requests the government's opinion on these proposals and international treaties, which take precedence over laws;
- Preparing opinions for government deliberations on draft constitutional laws, laws, and regulations of the government, as well as on legislative proposals and parliamentary bills if the chairman of the National Council of the Slovak Republic requests the government's opinion on these proposals, and by drafting international

agreements that take precedence over law.

However, since assessing draft laws and regulations is the main function of this body, its opportunity to coordinate government policies and influence policy proposal preparations is minimal.

Citation:

European Commission. 2022. Country Report – Slovakia. Brussels: European Commission.

[https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/2022-european-semester-country-report-slovakia\\_en.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/2022-european-semester-country-report-slovakia_en.pdf)

<https://www.vlada.gov.sk/legislativna-rada-vlady-sr/>

Indicator **Effective Coordination Mechanisms within the Ministerial Bureaucracy**

Question **To what extent are there positive (formalized) forms of coordination across ministries that aim to enhance policy coherence?**

30 OECD and EU countries are sorted according to their performance on a scale from 10 (best) to 1 (lowest). This scale is tied to four qualitative evaluation levels.

- 10-9 = Interministerial coordination mechanisms targeting policy coherence provide incentives for identifying synergies and opportunities.
- 8-6 = Interministerial coordination mechanisms targeting policy coherence sometimes provide incentives for identifying synergies and opportunities.
- 5-3 = Interministerial coordination mechanisms targeting policy coherence rarely provide incentives for identifying synergies and opportunities.
- 2-1 = There are no interministerial coordination mechanisms targeting policy coherence that provide incentives for identifying synergies and opportunities.

## Australia

Score 9 Government agencies in Australia have well-established practices for creating working groups to foster inter-agency cooperation on cross-domain challenges, such as cybersecurity. These groups often include external actors for additional input. For example, recent cybersecurity reforms stress coordination involving multiple federal departments – Home Affairs, Defence, Australian Signals Directorate, Foreign Affairs, and Attorney General’s – along with state governments and industry in a whole-of-nation effort to protect against cyber threats (Department of Home Affairs 2023). Regular movement across the public service, including secondments, facilitates knowledge-sharing. Many departments send staff to common training programs at institutions like the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG), supporting a common perspective on policy approaches.

Citation:

Department of Home Affairs. 2023. “Cyber security: Our partners.” Australian Government Department of Home Affairs <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/about-us/our-portfolios/cyber-security/our-partners>

## Finland

Score 9 The guiding rule in Finland is that each ministry is responsible for preparing issues that fall within its mandate and for ensuring the proper functioning of the administration. Given this framework, line ministries are expected to involve the Prime Minister’s Office in their policy preparations, rather than the other way around. In practice, the patterns of interaction are not fixed.

Policy programs and other intersectoral matters in the cabinet program concern the Prime Minister's Office as well as the ministries, and efforts must be coordinated. The government's analysis, assessment and research activities that support policymaking across the ministries are coordinated by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). Because decision-making is collective and consensual, ministry attempts to place items on the cabinet's agenda without involving the Prime Minister's Office will fail. The tradition of broad-based coalitions necessarily amalgamates ideological antagonisms, thereby mitigating fragmentation along ministerial and sectoral lines. The PMO is responsible for interadministration coordination in special areas, such as Arctic collaboration.

Ministerial committees effectively prepare for cabinet meetings. The government has four statutory ministerial committees: the Ministerial Committee on Foreign and Security Policy – which meets with the president when pressing issues arise – the Ministerial Committee on European Union Affairs, the Ministerial Finance Committee and the Ministerial Committee on Economic Policy. Additionally, ad hoc ministerial committees can be appointed by the government's plenary session. All these committees are chaired by the prime minister, who also chairs sessions of the Economic Council, the Research and Innovation Council, and the Title Board. Furthermore, there are several ministerial working groups. The primary task of these committees and groups is to prepare for cabinet meetings by fostering consensus between relevant ministries and interests. Overall, a large majority of issues are reviewed first by cabinet committees and working groups.

Interministerial coordination is facilitated by digital technologies such as IT programs and platforms, as well as digital information systems. These tools are widely used. Additionally, work-related incentives such as job rotation with the GO/PMO or job-sharing are available at all hierarchical levels to encourage civil servants to exchange information actively across ministerial boundaries in their daily work. The formal pre-consultation procedures provide incentives for identifying synergies and opportunities rather than focusing on incompatibilities with other policies (negative coordination).

Citation:

Interadministration coordination. <https://vnk.fi/en/inter-administrative-cooperation>

## Denmark

Score 8

There is a strong tradition of so-called ministerial rule (ministerstyre). Each minister is in charge of a specific area, but the cabinet operates as a collective unit, and is expected to maintain a single policy focus, directed by the prime minister.

Overall responsibility is coordinated through special committees. The most important is the government coordination committee, which meets weekly and plays

a crucial role, especially for coalition governments. Other committees include the committee on economic affairs, the security committee and the appointments committee. There is also a tradition of two-day government seminars once or twice per year where important government issues are discussed. Finally, ad hoc committees are routinely formed within ministries when new legislation is being prepared.

To become the permanent secretary, the highest civil servant in a ministry, candidates are now required to have leadership experience from an agency within a different ministry. This relatively new requirement is intended to ensure that top civil servants possess broad knowledge of the public sector. Moreover, it is believed to improve the understanding of implementation issues among the upper levels of ministerial hierarchies.

## Estonia

### Score 8

The Government Office (GO) and prime minister's support structures primarily provide consulting services, monitor governmental processes and provide technical (judicial) expertise. De facto, the GO's and prime minister's capacity to undertake substantial evaluations of line-ministry proposals is limited due to the efficiency aims, inflexibility and highly siloed nature of the administrative system (Elbrecht 2023). Hence, the supporting structures of government in Estonia are mainly located in the line ministries.

The need to improve governance policy innovation capacity and quality management, as well as to pursue holistic approaches, has long been a concern. There has been considerable demand for such state reform. One element of this state reform aims to improve the coherence of governance by merging executive agencies with overlapping functions and strengthening the Prime Minister's Office.

Currently, Estonia does not have a cabinet committee structure within the government or any ministerial committee tasked with fostering pre-consultations and synergies between ministries. Recently, however, steps have been taken to enhance cooperation and embrace a whole-of-government governance approach. These steps include granting the prime minister more power in strategic planning, initiating interministerial programs and increasing flexibility in recruiting personnel for interministerial units.

At the ministry level, procedures for coordinating policy proposals are set by national government rules. According to these rules, all relevant ministries must be consulted and involved in a consensus-building process before an amendment or policy proposal can be presented to the government. Additionally, senior civil servants from various ministries consult and inform each other about upcoming proposals. Deputy secretaries general play a key role in this informal consultation process.

The entire consultation process is managed via an online system for draft laws, the Information System for Legal Drafts (Eelnõude infosüsteem, EIS). The EIS allows users to search documents currently under consideration, participate in public consultations and submit comments on draft bills. Policymaking and policy monitoring are further supported by an interoperable data exchange platform called X-Road, an integrated system facilitating data exchange between different organizations and information systems. However, this has been criticized as a passive minimum that rarely generates qualitative and useful insights for suggestions.

As a result, Estonia's Digital Agenda 2030 targets the development of an interinstitutional data governance and data science competence center, as well as the expansion of the usage of the administrative system for technical services and of the state information system databases. One of the sub-aims is also to improve the participatory element in the EIS, a pilot of which is already underway.

Citation:

Elbrecht, G. 2023. "Riigireformist ja riigivalitsemise tulevikust (About State Reform and the Future of State Governance in Estonia)." Riigikogu Toimetised 48. [https://rito.riigikogu.ee/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/81-94\\_Fookus-Elbrecht.pdf](https://rito.riigikogu.ee/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/81-94_Fookus-Elbrecht.pdf)

## Lithuania

### Score 8

Regular interministerial coordination forums such as interinstitutional meetings allow chancellors from line ministries and vice ministers to discuss policy initiatives and align the positions of different ministries before these policies are adopted by the government. These forums sometimes provide incentives for identifying synergies and opportunities for policy coherence among various ministries.

Additionally, a network of chief scientific officers in line ministries was established in 2023 to facilitate interministerial coordination in the field of innovation. It is too early to evaluate its effectiveness.

Despite formal arrangements, interministerial coordination tends to be rather weak in practice, especially among civil servants and on issues overlapping several policy areas. Typical issues include addressing skill mismatches and bottlenecks in labor market regulation. Another area in which interministerial coordination is lacking is in reducing the regulatory and administrative burden for businesses.

The positions on draft EU legal initiatives are debated within the Governmental European Union Commission, which includes vice ministers from line ministries, the vice-chancellor of the government and the permanent representative at the EU. This commission typically adopts the national position before EU Council meetings, which the government then approves with minimal substantial debate. For example,

during the term of the current coalition government, formed at the end of 2020, only one EU-related policy issue – the Fit for 55 package – was debated in substance at a government meeting. The LINESIS digital system is used to coordinate the positions of different line ministries on draft EU initiatives in real time.

## New Zealand

### Score 8

There are several mechanisms and practices that contribute to fostering positive coordination across ministries to enhance policy coherence and effectiveness.

The primary formalized coordination mechanisms include interministerial working groups, which consist of representatives from various ministries and agencies and are established to address specific policy areas or projects; officials committees, which comprise senior officials from different ministries and are tasked with advising ministers on policy matters; and cabinet committees, which are formed to focus on specific policy areas, and include relevant ministers and senior officials. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) also plays a central role in coordinating government policies, ensuring that policies align with the government's priorities and providing advice with the goal of improving policy coherence.

Various digital technologies and information systems facilitate collaboration, information-sharing and efficiency across ministries. Examples include shared digital platforms, intranets and online collaboration tools. In 2020, the portfolio of minister for the digital economy and communication was created. The government chief digital officer (GCDO) leads the development and improvement of digital infrastructure across the government. The GCDO is supported by the Digital Government Leadership Group, a partnership of stakeholders from various agencies aiming to create a coherent, all-of-government digital system. This group assists the GCDO and the government chief data steward (GCDS) in developing and improving the digital and data systems across the government, ensures alignment with the government ICT strategy, and reviews and informs the strategy (New Zealand Government n.d.). However, it remains unclear how effective the use of digital technologies is, particularly regarding interministerial coordination.

Formal pre-consultation procedures are designed to encourage the identification of synergies and opportunities among policies rather than solely emphasizing incompatibilities (negative coordination) with other policies. In particular, pre-consultation procedures require ministries preparing a policy proposal to consult not only other affected ministries, but also the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Treasury, and the Public Service Commission. Early engagement with relevant ministries and other stakeholders allows for discussions of potential synergies and areas of alignment, encouraging proactive identification of opportunities for policy integration.

Over time, New Zealand has witnessed an increasing number of cross-agency initiatives coordinated by a single line agency but involving numerous others to address “wicked” problems. One of these is the Joint Venture on Family and Sexual Violence, housed within the Ministry of Justice, but coordinated across 10 agencies (MOJ 2022).

Citation:

MOJ. 2022. “Ministry of Justice.” <https://www.justice.govt.nz/about/news-and-media/news/joint-venture-adopts-new-name-te-puna-aonui/>

New Zealand Government. n.d. “Digital Government: Leadership.” <https://www.digital.govt.nz/digital-government/leadership/>

## Austria

### Score 7

There are formally established interministerial coordination mechanisms within the Austrian political executive. However, these structures or mechanisms are confined to specific areas, such as gender issues or youth issues. In some cases, it is subjective to determine whether existing structures should be considered formal or informal mechanisms (on the latter, see G1.3).

Arguably, the most prominent and important formal structure in the field of interministerial coordination is the Interministerial Working Group on Gender Mainstreaming/Budgeting, chaired by the federal minister for women, family, integration, and media in the Federal Chancellor’s Office. This group supports the process of implementing gender mainstreaming – accomplishing gender parity in all relevant areas – and gender budgeting across all government departments and governance levels.

The body’s tasks include organizing information exchange, examining best-practice examples from individual departments and abroad, and developing and evaluating current projects and laws concerning the adoption of central gender mainstreaming goals. Members of this working group include representatives from all government departments, the courts, the Austrian Ombudsman Board (Volksanwaltschaft), the Court of Audit, and parliament, as well as the trade union for public services and the states (Länder) (Schieder and Schmidt 2023).

Austria does not have a notable tradition of formalized digitized interministerial coordination, or if it does, little is known about it. However, much like in other countries, the coronavirus pandemic acted as a significant digitalization catalyst. Since early 2020, Austrian ministers and ministries have used Zoom and other digital formats to host regular interministerial exchanges. With some exceptions, there generally exists a high degree of informal interministerial coordination at the level of civil servants.

Citation:

<https://www.imag-gmb.at/Arbeitsgruppe/interministerielle-arbeitsgruppe.html#:~:text=Die%20Interministerielle%20Arbeitsgruppe%20ist%20ein,des%20f%C3%BCr%20Frauenangelegenheiten%20zust%C3%A4ndigen%20Regierungsmitglieds>

Wojtarowicz, Natalie, and David M. Herold. 2014. "Coordination Practices in Federal Government: The Case of Integration Policy in Austria." *Journal of Economic & Social Policy* 16 (2): 210-232.

Schieder, Sandra, and Colette M. Schmidt. 2023. "Inside Ministerrat: Ein Blick hinter die Kulissen eines wöchentlichen Regierungsrituals." *Der Standard*, October 4.

<https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000186930/inside-ministerrat-ein-blick-hinter-die-kulissen-eines-woechentlichen-regierungsrituals>

## Belgium

Score 7

At the federal level, Belgium, like many OECD countries, allows internal mobility for civil servants, including senior levels, but this is neither promoted nor expected (OECD 2023). This can become a problem when ministries lose responsibilities. For instance, when the single market was created, Belgium had an excess supply of customs officers. Instead of reskilling them for other ministries, many remained in their original administration. Furthermore, Belgium has yet to adopt the approach of formulating learning plans for the majority or entirety of its public sector employees (OECD 2023).

As detailed in "Effective Coordination Mechanisms of the GO/PMO," coordination between ministers is necessary to table a proposal. However, this does not prevent a single minister from using their own administration to develop a proposal unbeknownst to ministers from other parties and revealing it at a later stage. To limit this, experts close to another party are typically embedded in the minister's team.

Concerning digitalization, the Federal Public Service for Information & Communication Technology (FEDICT) is responsible for defining and implementing an e-governance strategy. However, this agency primarily focuses on government-to-citizen (G2C) and government-to-business (G2B) communication, while government-to-government (G2G) interactions are largely overlooked. Although cooperation and coordination are improving within each government level, the federal structure hinders the sharing of a single IT architecture across government levels. Each level is responsible for its digital infrastructure.

However, Belgium fares comparatively well internationally. The U.N. E-Government Survey 2022 ranked Belgium among the countries with a "very high" e-government development index.

Citation:

OECD. 2023. "Belgium | Country Notes | OECD Government at a Glance." <https://www.oecd.org/publication/government-at-a-glance/2023/country-notes/belgium-054f6923/>

<http://www.premier.be/fr/conseil-des-ministres>

Structuur van de Vlaamse overheid | Vlaanderen.be : <https://www.vlaanderen.be/structuur-van-de-vlaamse->

overheid#q-06c38c8d-d3ea-4577-ac6f-b52c5672dc25

Opdrachten | FOD Kanselarij van de Eerste Minister (belgium.be): <https://www.kanselarij.belgium.be/nl/opdrachten>  
 Arrête Royal du 22/02/2017 arrête royal portant création du service public fédéral stratégie et appui. 2017. openjustice.be. [https://etaamb.openjustice.be/fr/arrête-royal-du-22-fevrier-2017\\_n2017010836](https://etaamb.openjustice.be/fr/arrête-royal-du-22-fevrier-2017_n2017010836)

G-Cloud – Home (belgium.be) : <https://www.gcloud.belgium.be/nl/home>

<https://infocenter.belgium.be/fr/statistiques/spf-technologie-de-l-information-et-de-la-communication>

<https://d9db56472fd41226d193->

[1e5e0d4b7948acaf6080b0dce0b35ed5.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/events/forum/2004/panel\\_handouts/fedict.pdf](https://d9db56472fd41226d193-1e5e0d4b7948acaf6080b0dce0b35ed5.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/events/forum/2004/panel_handouts/fedict.pdf)

<https://digitaldashboard.belgium.be/fr>

<http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Documents/UNPAN97453.pdf>

United Nations. 2022. “E-Government Survey 2022: The Future of Digital Government.”

[https://desapublications.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/2022-09/Web%20version%20E-](https://desapublications.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/2022-09/Web%20version%20E-Government%202022.pdf)

[Government%202022.pdf](https://desapublications.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/2022-09/Web%20version%20E-Government%202022.pdf)

## Canada

Score 7

Many interdepartmental committees exist to coordinate ministerial activities. Some work better than others (Canadian Heritage 2021).

Draft bills are vetted primarily by the Privy Council Office and, to a lesser extent, by Finance Canada and the Treasury Board. These central agencies are crucial for a proposal to advance to senior levels within the federal public service. Central-agency staff members typically possess the expertise needed for the regular and independent evaluation of draft bills based on the government’s strategic and budgetary priorities.

Line departments and central agencies have different capacities for coordinating policy proposals since ultimate authority lies with central agencies like the PCO and the Treasury Board. Financing of policy initiatives and program design are vetted by Finance Canada and the Treasury Board Secretariat, respectively.

Many policy proposals are coordinated by line ministries with other line ministries. In the past, cabinet committees facilitated this interdepartmental coordination. However, in the modern era, the power to resolve issues before they reach the cabinet lies with the Privy Council Office and often the Prime Minister’s Office.

Department-to-department processes are generally not as effective as central agency coordination. On certain issues, a line department may be unwilling to recognize the role or expertise of other line departments, or it may have fundamental differences in perspectives on the issue. As a result, the department may fail to consult sufficiently or

Coordinate a policy proposal with others, requiring Treasury Board, PCO, or PMO intervention (French 1980).

For policy proposals advancing to the cabinet, line departments must undertake the necessary consultations to ensure the proposal has been circulated and considered by other relevant ministries. Central agencies, however, still perform a critical oversight and steering role in this process.

Deputies meet regularly to discuss issues, policies, and programs under development. Frequently, when new policies are being developed, steering committees are formed involving several departments and led by senior officials. This often precedes the interministerial consultations that the PCO requires. Additionally, there is a rotation of personnel among posts to enhance collaboration and knowledge in other mandate areas. This rotation includes not only senior officials but also mid-range managers and operational personnel.

Citation:

Canadian Heritage. 2021. "Evaluation of Interdepartmental Coordination (in Relation to Section 42 of the Official Languages Act) 2013-14 to 2017-18." <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/corporate/publications/evaluations/official-languages-interdepartmental-coordination.html>

French, R. 1980. *How Ottawa Decides: Planning and Industrial Policy-Making 1968-1980*. Toronto: Lorimer.

## Czechia

Score 7

The government's legislative plan divides tasks among ministries and other central bodies of the state administration, setting deadlines for submitting bills to the cabinet. Task allocation is transparent. Some horizontal coordination among line-ministry civil servants occurs. Senior ministry officials play a crucial role in collecting and discussing comments on proposed legislation. However, barriers persist among the ministries, particularly between line ministries controlled by different political parties.

The decision-making process also involves various interministerial groups or councils formally established under a specific ministry, in which various other ministries are represented. These groups may submit material during the preparatory process for government meetings and participate in the interministerial comment procedure. The councils provide advice prior to decision-making on various topics, but their powers are limited to making recommendations. For example, the Council on Sustainable Development, under the Ministry of the Environment, has 42 members, including representatives of the Government Office, 15 ministries, and outside interests such as NGOs, trade unions, employers' organizations, and various individual experts.

## France

Score 7

If a line ministry wishes to get its proposals accepted or passed, it must liaise and coordinate with other ministries or agencies involved in the area of this legislation. If this consultation has not taken place, objections expressed by other ministers or by the Council of State might serve to kill a project. All ministries are equal, but some are more equal than others: For example, the finance minister is a crucial and indispensable actor consulted on virtually all projects. Usually, the coordination and consultation processes are placed under the responsibility of a "rapporteur" – usually a lawyer from the ministerial bureaucracy (which is also in charge of arguing for and defending the draft bill before the Council of State, whose intervention is crucial

even beyond the purely legal point of view). The dossier is always followed by a member of the minister's staff who communicates with his counterparts and tries to smooth the process as much as possible.

France is doing comparatively well in terms of digital government, according to a recent OECD (2020) study. Overall, the country receives above-average scores and is ranked 10th among the OECD countries, outperforming countries including Estonia, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. Several digital information platforms have been built, but have had only mixed success (Cabut et al. 2022).

In 2011, an interministerial Directorate for State Information Systems and Communication was established. In 2014, to strengthen its capacity to steer and influence the sectoral administrations, the directorate was placed under the authority of the prime minister. A further impulse has been given to the directorate by the Macron administration's emphasis on the technological revolution. In parallel, a report of the Court of Accounts, in support of past actions, recommended a major effort to improve investment and personnel training. The new secretariat is building on these actions with a view to providing users with a single identification number that would provide access to all public services. Several experiences have already been quite successful. For example, the digitalization of tax declarations, processes and payments has been so successful that for most taxpayers, the use of printed documents is no longer possible. Various efforts to improve coordination between administrations have been implemented. For instance, public procurement processes that involve several administrations have been streamlined, and private companies can access the system using their registration number. Nonetheless, exchanges of information across minister portfolios still need to be more systematic.

In general, it is still quite often the case that governmental "couac" (i.e., mixed signals) happens, with ministries trying to push an initiative without prior clear consultation within the government. Marlène Schiappa, former secretary of state for gender equality, was thus nicknamed "Madam Controversy" before she finally resigned.

Citation:

Cabut, S., Piquard, A., and Untersinger, M. 2022. "Controversé et retardé, le Health Data Hub veut pourtant faire ses preuves dans la santé." *Le Monde*, January 26.

OECD. 2020. "OECD Digital Government Index (DGI) 2019." <https://www.oecd.org/gov/digital-government-index-4de9f5bb-en.htm>

## Germany

### Score 7

Policy proposals often affect the responsibilities of several line ministries and require coordination. The German ministerial bureaucracy provides some incentives and established mechanisms for coordination across ministries. However, in most cases, one line ministry leads a policy proposal, and coordination with other ministries is

secondary. Given the political differences among the three coalition partners of the Traffic Light Coalition, tensions and power struggles between line ministries have regularly occurred in the policymaking process.

Interministerial working groups exist at all hierarchical levels, though their permanence and formalization vary.

Digital coordination and digital administration are explicit goals of German governance. Although intranets and digital platforms for interministerial exchanges are in use, digital administration has not yet reached its full potential. According to the “Digital Check” implemented by the Bundestag in 2022 and performed yearly by the Norm Control Council (NKR), there is ample room for improvement in development, utilization, and education related to digital coordination tools (“Digitalcheck,” 2023).

In accordance with the “Rotationsbeschluss,” a decision by the government in 1995, regular exchanges of employees between the chancellery and the line ministries are encouraged and mandatory. This is an established practice in both agencies (Busse and Hofmann, 2019). Often, employees who have completed a stint at the chancellery are later promoted to make use of their increased oversight and experience, providing incentives for job rotation and encouraging information exchanges across ministerial boundaries.

According to the GGO (Gemeinsame Geschäftsordnung der Bundesministerien), line ministries are required to cooperate and coordinate on policy designs before presenting them in the federal cabinet. However, this process is usually not enforced (“Gemeinsame Geschäftsordnung der Bundesministerien,” 2020).

Political practice and precedent ensure that ministries generally avoid making proposals that might be blocked by other ministries and that conflicts between ministries are often resolved before cabinet meetings. Policy proposals in specific areas cannot be made without the involvement of the responsible ministry, such as budgetary decisions, which must involve the Federal Ministry of Finance. However, the Traffic Light Coalition and their respective ministries often clash on topics where party lines do not align, occasionally resulting in public conflict and conflicting policy proposals reaching the media. This has, in some cases, mitigated fluidity in coordination. The root of these issues lies more in party politics than in organizational structure.

Citation:

Busse, V., and H. Hofmann. 2019. *Bundeskanzleramt und Bundesregierung*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft.

Digitalcheck. 2023. “Bundesministerium für Justiz.” [www.normenkontrollrat.bund.de/Webs/NKR/DE/weniger-buerokratie-und-besseres-recht/digitalcheck/digitalcheck.html](http://www.normenkontrollrat.bund.de/Webs/NKR/DE/weniger-buerokratie-und-besseres-recht/digitalcheck/digitalcheck.html)

Gemeinsame Geschäftsordnung der Bundesministerien. 2020. [www.verwaltungsvorschriften-im-internet.de/bsvwvbund\\_21072009\\_O11313012.htm](http://www.verwaltungsvorschriften-im-internet.de/bsvwvbund_21072009_O11313012.htm)

## Greece

### Score 7

Coordination within the ministerial bureaucracy, which was somewhat inconsistent in the past, has been improved since the government reorganization in 2019. In each line ministry, a “Coordination Service” unit has been established, staffed by permanent civil servants. Their role is to ensure regular communication and interaction between the ministry and the Presidency of the Government. As a result, the Presidency of the Government receives regular updates from line ministries on policy matters. The Presidency itself is well-staffed, well-resourced, and utilizes modern management methods and digital technologies.

Horizontal coordination also takes place through interministerial committees, most of which are formed to address specific tasks, such as responding to crises caused by natural disasters. However, there are two permanent committees: the Government Council on National Security (KYSEA), which selects the heads of the armed forces and formulates defense and security policy, and the Government Council on Economic Policy (KYSOIP), which formulates and reviews key economic policies.

For minor policy implementation issues, civil servants frequently exchange information across ministerial boundaries. However, for more significant issues, they must escalate information and proposals through their ministry’s hierarchical structure before further collaboration with other ministries can occur. It is typically the top staff of each ministry (“General and Special Secretaries,” “Service Secretaries,” and “Directors General”) who identify synergies and opportunities for coordination.

Due to the strict control and streamlined coordination exercised by the Presidency of the Government, it is extremely rare for ministers to be surprised by initiatives taken by their colleagues in other ministries.

Citation:

For the KYSOIP council, see [https://gslegal.gov.gr/?page\\_id=4587](https://gslegal.gov.gr/?page_id=4587)

For the KYSEA council, see <https://www.primeminister.gr/governance/collective-bodies>

The Coordination Services, found in each ministry, are regulated by Law 4622/2019 (article 38).

In 2015-2019 there were additional interministerial councils. They covered three policy areas: social policy, migration policy, and national communication policy. They were convened infrequently and remained largely inactive.

## Hungary

### Score 7

Under the present government, the number of ministries has increased to a more adequate number of 14, compared to the relatively low number in previous terms. This shift necessitates the replacement of intraministerial coordination with interministerial coordination. The Orbán governments have occasionally set up

cabinet committees. However, these committees have to date played a subordinate role in interministerial coordination, primarily because of the limited number of ministries and the strong coordination from above. In the current parliamentary term, there are four cabinets: an economic cabinet; a strategy cabinet (a mixed shop); a cabinet on “nation-policy” (nemzetpolitika) dealing with state-church relations, national minorities and questions of the Hungarian nation such as citizenship; and a national security cabinet (defense council). In the Hungarian system, vertical coordination is stronger than horizontal coordination. Most horizontal conflicts arise when certain responsibilities are moved from one ministry to another or when new ministries are established. For example, the supervision of secret services was transferred from the Ministry of Interior to the Prime Minister’s Cabinet Office in 2022. Another instance is the establishment of the Ministry of Construction and Transport, led by a highly conflict-seeking minister (János Lázár). The political impetus stemming from the prime minister’s convictions is highly prioritized, and the line ministries are executors of this political will. Consequently, skirmishes between ministries about policy options and sectoral interests are rare. Still, the pivotal role of the Prime Minister’s Office has sometimes resulted in it becoming a bottleneck in policymaking.

## Italy

### Score 7

The bureaucratic aspect of policy formulation at the centralized national level remains a concealed process, insufficiently examined by scholars. Here are the main features of the bureaucratic side of policy formulation from a formal point of view:

**Interministerial committees:** Various interministerial committees are responsible for exchanging information, evidence-based opinions, and ideas to advise the government on specific draft policy solutions. The most important committees deal with economic and financial matters, including the Interministerial Committee on Credit and Savings, the Committee for the Planning and Coordination of Financial Education Initiatives, the Committee on Accounting Principles, and the Interministerial Committee on Economic Planning.

**Use of information technology:** The use of IT in interministerial coordination has increased following COVID-19, though it remains insufficient for drafting policy texts.

**Lack of organizational incentives:** There is no significant organizational or structural incentive to coordinate.

**Pre-consultation practices:** Pre-consultation among ministerial offices is routinely conducted before cabinet meetings in the “Pre-consiglio” (Pre-cabinet) under the aegis of the DAGL (Department for Legal and Legislative Matters of the Presidency of the Council). The head of DAGL is a powerful figure in the administrative

dimension of the cabinet and holds a political role due to a direct link with the president of the Council. The Ministry of the Treasury also serves as the central point of reference for any pre-consultation activity.

Overall, the use of information technology in drafting policy texts is insufficient, and positive coordination is less widespread than it should be. Effective coordination depends on the proactive roles of the Treasury or the PMO. It is important to note that many crucial issues are effectively handled through consultations between a few ministers and their ministerial cabinets before being brought to the Council of Ministers or deferred to this procedure after a preliminary discussion in the council. These consultations usually involve the treasury.

Citation:

Piccirilli, G. 2022. "Lo (scarso) impiego delle nuove tecnologie da parte del Governo nella redazione degli atti." Osservatorio sulle Fonti no. 2: 311-320.

REV: on the functions of DAGL see: <https://presidenza.governo.it/DAGL/index.html>

## Latvia

Score 7

In March 2023 the State Chancellery absorbed the Cross-Sectoral Coordination Center, unifying essential functions like long-term policy development, modernization of public administration, and inter-sectoral coordination under a single team. The reorganization aims to reinforce the State Chancellery's role as a pivotal government hub, bolstering its analytical power to aid the prime minister and the government in policy formulation, design and implementation.

Modifications to Cabinet Regulation No 606 laid the groundwork for thematic cabinet committees. Established by a prime minister's decree, the committees will focus on specific areas and predefined action plans, necessitating collaborative efforts from various line ministries. The prime minister or an appointed minister will lead these committees, comprising other ministers or officials. The committees, set to convene on Wednesdays, will deliberate on both agreed and non-agreed draft legislation, potentially proposing new drafts based on their decisions.

Presently, three thematic committees are dedicated to Digital Modernization, Strategic Management, and Energy, Environment, and Climate.

A webpage, the TAP portal, was launched in autumn 2021 and implemented across the government starting Sept. 9, 2021. It has digitalized the cabinet's operations, including task assignments, legislative drafting, approval, and electronic signatures. Ministers can remotely participate in cabinet meetings, submit drafts, vote, and sign documents from any location with internet access. The portal serves as a comprehensive platform to track the progress of projects, from public engagement to cabinet adoption, and facilitates public participation in policymaking. It has significantly automated processes, reducing manual tasks in the line ministries. Over

800 projects have been directed to public involvement through the portal (Valsts Kanceleja, 2023).

In 2022, the “Development of a Single Service Center for Public Administration in Latvia” project was launched to provide a digitalized, standardized, and more efficiently managed system for public administration accounting and human resource management. The Single Service Center will be the new agency operating on standardized processes, with the necessary infrastructure and information system solutions to provide accounting and human resources management services for public administration.

The TAP portal offers both public users and bureaucrats access to view the tasks assigned to various ministries. It serves as a platform where they can prepare and review opinions from other ministries on draft laws or other documents that necessitate agreement from multiple ministries. This feature enhances transparency and collaboration across different governmental departments.

The timeframe given to ministries for providing opinions on draft laws or other significant documents is often too short, making it challenging for them to comply within the set deadlines. This time constraint can negatively impact the thoroughness and quality of the feedback or opinions provided by the ministries.

Latvia’s policy-planning system is well established, limiting individual ministries’ ability to push through initiatives without debate with other ministries. All new policy initiatives are discussed within the government, even if these debates are brief.

In governmental operations, various interministerial collaborations have been established to address critical areas such as enhancing human capital for the labor market and coordinating climate policies. These collaborative efforts are crucial for cohesive and effective policy development and implementation. Additionally, there is provision for online participation in thematic committees of the Cabinet of Ministers, allowing for broader and more flexible involvement and facilitating easier access and contribution to governmental discussions and decision-making processes.

There are different formats for cooperation, and the legislative framework is designed to promote collaboration and joint problem-solving. However, policy coordination within bureaucracies is typically performed within formal boundaries and is effective for well-known issues. Coordination challenges persist, particularly in preparing bureaucracies to handle complex and “wicked” problems. Additionally, there are no incentives such as job rotations or job-sharing across ministries to encourage active information exchange.

Citation:

Ministru kabinets. 2023. “Ministru kabineta tematiskās komitejas.” <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/ministru-kabineta-tematiskas-komitejas>

Valsts kanceleja. 2023. “Gada pārskats 2022. gads.” <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/16278/download?attachment>

Ekonomikas ministrija. 2024. "Cilvēkkapitāla attīstības padome konceptuāli atbalsta EM piedāvāto pārvaldības modeli efektīvākai starpministriju sadarbībai." <https://lvportals.lv/dienaskartiba/359357-cilvekkapitāla-attistibas-padome-konceptuali-atbalsta-em-piedavato-parvaldibas-modeli-efektivakai-starpministriju-sadarbibai-2024>

Ministru kabinets. 2021. Ministru kabineta rīkojums Nr. 437 Par starpministriju darba grupas izveidi klimata politikas koordinācijai. <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/324318-par-starpministriju-darba-grupas-izveidi-klimata-politikas-koordinacijai>

Digitālās modernizācijas tematiskā komiteja. 2023. Digitālās modernizācijas tematiskās komitejas sēdes protokols. <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/17625/download?attachment>

## Norway

### Score 7

Despite the formal coordination role of the Ministry of Finance and the informal mechanisms of inter-party cooperation in coalition governments, the Norwegian governance system is generally regarded as highly sectorized rather than fragmented. Each ministry is responsible for research and policy development within its specific area of formal responsibility. There is no tradition of job rotation within the civil service, nor is there a central effort to use new technologies to enhance cooperation. Additionally, most interactions with policy stakeholders and interest groups are structured according to traditional sectoral lines.

This sectorization is increasingly seen as a challenge in developing new policies that cut across traditional divisions, such as measures to expedite the transition to a low-emission, sustainable economy and digitalization (see Szulecki and Kivimaa, 2022). A new Ministry of Digitalization will take effect in January 2024, while the responsibility for contributing to the "green shift" remains a sectoral responsibility for the line ministries.

The government and all ministers meet formally every week in so-called government conferences ("regjeringskonferanser") to discuss issues. These conferences are the primary forum for formal coordination between departments, ensuring that the government is united in its policies.

Digital technologies are extensively used to facilitate coordination across ministerial areas. They are more commonly employed in ministries than in agencies and more often by managers than by lower-ranking officers. Civil servants working on transboundary tasks and policies use these technologies more frequently and view them as helpful in enhancing coordination.

#### Citation:

Szulecki, K., and Kivimaa, P. 2022. "Norway needs energy and security policy coherence." <https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/norway-needs-energy-and-security-policy-coherence>

Ministry of Digitalisation and Public Governance website. <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dep/dfd/id810/>

Christensen, T., and P. Lægreid. 2022. "ICT Use in Central Government: Scope, Predictors and Effects on Coordination Quality." *International Journal of Public Administration* 45 (3): 273-286.

## Poland

### Score 7

The Chancellery of the prime minister plays a crucial role in orchestrating interministerial activities, managing the government's work, coordinating actions among ministries and overseeing the implementation of government priorities. Joint government committees are established for interministerial coordination, bringing together representatives from various ministries.

Under the conservative administration, examples of these operating committees included the Interministerial Team for Developing Changes to the Comprehensive Support Program for Families “For Life” (2020); the Interministerial Team for Polonia and Poles Abroad Affairs (2021); the Interministerial Team for Reviewing Conditions for Investment Processes in the Republic of Poland (2021); and the team addressing threats arising from hazardous materials in Poland's maritime areas (2022). The newly appointed liberal government initiated its first team tasked with restoring the rule of law and constitutional order on December 13, 2023.

Interministerial agreements have covered projects, reports and other critical documents, such as the “Eighth Government Report for the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC” and the “Fifth Two-Year Report for the Conference of the Parties.” Additionally, agreements included the establishment of the long-term program “Management of Water Resources in Poland.”

Ministries are empowered to submit interministerial interpellations and formal inquiries to seek specific information or actions from other ministries, facilitating the flow of information between them. Interministerial coordination often entails collaborative projects or programs, particularly in areas involving multiple ministries, such as economic development, education or health. Coordination has extended to events significant from a public diplomacy perspective, as demonstrated during the World Urban Forum in 2022. Moreover, joint actions are taken in response to current challenges, exemplified by the interministerial meeting on the situation in the grain market in August 2023.

Effective coordination has played a crucial role in managing European funds. For example, the European Funds for Modern Economy and the European Funds for Social Development (2021 – 2027) required agreements between various ministries and government agencies. Key entities involved included the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, the Bank of National Economy, the Digital Poland Projects Center, the Center for European Projects and the Chancellery.

Similarly, implementing the European Funds for Digital Development 2021 – 2027 necessitated cooperation between the minister of funds and regional policy and representatives of the Chancellery and the Digital Poland Projects Center. This cooperation was formalized in a trilateral agreement concluded in February 2023.

Earlier strategically pivotal documents, such as the National Reform Program and the Strategy for Responsible Development, were also products of extensive interministerial coordination. Final decisions were reached during Council of Ministers meetings, during which ministers presented and deliberated on their positions.

## Portugal

### Score 7

There are numerous interministerial commissions (ICs) addressing a wide array of subjects, ranging from the utilization of European Funds (Portugal 2030) to water management, cooperation, education, and professional training, among others (see references for details). Typically, these ICs involve civil servants from various ministries, each relevant to the specific topic, and occasionally members of the cabinets of line ministers. They also have the option to seek guidance from experts. This implies a significant level of coordination among bureaucratic units from different sectoral ministries.

In practice, these working groups exhibit a fluctuating composition, as the civil servants designated by ministers can vary. Their organizational structure is also unstable, and they often lack a designated meeting location. Unfortunately, very little information is disseminated about their proceedings.

Consider, for instance, the Interministerial Committee for Coordinating Education and Professional Training within the scope of the National Qualifications System (ICCEPF, as per Presidência do Conselho de Ministros et al. 2021). This committee involves six ministers, and its coordination changes every six months. The responsibility alternates between various government sectors: labor and training, education (primary and secondary), science and higher education, and the economy. The committee is supposed to convene once every six months, with technical and logistical support provided by the government office responsible for coordination. Unfortunately, the constant organizational changes and personnel turnover do not bode well for the effectiveness of these working groups.

With few exceptions, such as institutions related to managing the Resilient and Recovery Funds, there are no digital platforms to support these working groups. These meetings, despite their challenges, prove highly effective in fostering policy coordination across the government. Moreover, the assessment of diverse proposals within each ministry extends beyond the attending secretaries of state to include ministerial advisers and, to some extent, senior officials of the public administration.

#### Citation:

Governo de Portugal. 2023. "Interministerial Commission of Coordination: Portugal 2030." <https://portugal2030.pt/2023/03/10/regulamento-interno-da-comissao-interministerial-de-coordenacao-do-portugal-2030>

Presidência do Conselho de Ministros et al. 2021. Despacho 12818/2021 Creates the Interministerial committee for

coordinating the education and professional training within the scope of the National Qualifications System.  
<https://files.dre.pt/2s/2021/12/25200000/0002200024.pdf>

Direção-Geral de Política do Mar. “Interministerial Commission of Mar Affairs (Comissão Interministerial de Assuntos do Mar).” <https://www.dgpm.mm.gov.pt/ciam>

Minister of Environment. “Interministerial Commission of Water Management.” <https://apambiente.pt/agua/comissao-interministerial-de-coordenacao-da-agua>

Camões: Instituto da Cooperação e da Língua. “Interministerial Commission for Cooperation.” <https://www.instituto-camoes.pt/activity/o-que-fazemos/cooperacao/atuacao/coordenamos/cic>

## Slovenia

### Score 7

The Government Rules of Procedure, adopted in 2001, define cooperation between ministries. The government establishes committees for the preliminary examination of individual matters and interministerial cooperation. The government determines which decisions the ministers on a committee are authorized to make on its behalf. A committee may cease its activities as soon as it has fulfilled its tasks.

The Office of the Government for Legislation ensures that regulations are constitutional and lawful, internally consistent, drafted according to nontechnical rules, understandable to the public, and practical in application. This government service plays a crucial role in coordinating cross-departmental regulations. According to the government’s rules of procedure, proposals for general legislation must always be coordinated in advance with the Office of the Government for Legislation.

The General Secretariat of the Government manages the technical aspects and administration of government activities. This body is responsible for organizing meetings of the government, its working bodies, expert councils, and other government entities, as well as monitoring the implementation of the government’s decisions and obligations.

Communication among government members occurs via the government information system, which is accessible to government members, the secretary-general, the prime minister’s head of office, heads of government services, and their representatives. Decisions on European legislation are made through the EU portal, which is part of the government information system. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs uses its information system for EU matters related to the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union. When EU matters are published on the EU portal, it is assumed that the material has been distributed to all ministries and government departments. The EU portal is also used to inform the National Assembly.

In December 2022 and March 2023, the government adopted the new Digital Public Services Strategy 2030 and the Digital Slovenia 2030 Strategy, respectively. The Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Digital Transformation

was established by the Janša government as a ministry without a portfolio. Although it remains part of the current government, it was reorganized in January 2023 and assigned to the Ministry of Digital Transformation. This ministry is responsible for providing electronic public administration services and, in May 2023, presented guidelines to public administration bodies for accelerating digital transformation in public administration.

Citation:

Republika Slovenija. 2024. "O Ministrstvu za digitalno preobrazbo." <https://www.gov.si/drzavni-organi/ministrstva/ministrstvo-za-digitalno-preobrazbo/o-ministrstvu-za-digitalno-preobrazbo/>

Vlada Republike Slovenije. 2023. "Digitalna Slovenija 2023." [https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MDP/Dokumenti/DSI2030-potrjena-na-Vladi-RS\\_marec-2023.pdf](https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MDP/Dokumenti/DSI2030-potrjena-na-Vladi-RS_marec-2023.pdf)

Republika Slovenija. 2023. "Usmeritve za pospešitev digitalne preobrazbe v javni upravi." <https://www.gov.si/novice/2023-05-15-usmeritve-za-pospesitev-digitalne-preobrazbe-v-javni-upravi/>

Republika Slovenija. 2023. "C2K7 – Digitalna preobrazba javnega sektorja in javne uprave." <https://www.gov.si/zbirke/projekti-in-programi/nacrt-za-okrevanje-in-odpornost/o-nacrtu-za-okrevanje-in-odpornost/digitalna-preobrazba/c2k7-digitalna-preobrazba-javnega-sektorja-in-javne-uprave>

Official Journal. 2001. Poslovnik vlade Republike Slovenije. <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=POS32>

Republike Slovenije. 2023. "O Služba vlade za zakonodajo." <https://www.gov.si/drzavni-organi/vladne-sluzbe/sluzba-vlade-za-zakonodajo/o-sluzbi/>

## Spain

### Score 7

The two most important senior bureaucratic positions in the ministries are the secretaries of state, akin to junior ministers but not formally part of the cabinet, and the undersecretaries, career civil servants acting as department administrators. These officials meet in the General Committee of Undersecretaries and Secretaries of State to coordinate upcoming policy initiatives, often the first time other ministries learn of a policy initiative from a different department. This committee effectively prepares the Council of Ministers' weekly sessions held on Tuesdays.

The head of the Government Office chairs the preparatory committee meetings, where all draft bills, appointments, and other ministerial proposals are discussed and scheduled for the Council of Ministers' agenda. A provisional agenda is published a week before the cabinet meeting, and the Government Office circulates all relevant documents for discussion by the line ministers.

On Tuesday mornings, the prime minister's advisers assess the relative importance of agenda items and identify likely divergent positions. The preparatory committee performs an important gatekeeping function by returning problematic proposals to the appropriate line ministry and forwarding the remaining proposals to the Council of Ministers.

High-ranking civil servants play a crucial role in preparing policy proposals within each line ministry but have limited involvement in horizontal coordination with other ministries. Due to strong departmentalization, each ministry tends to act within its area of competence, avoiding proposals that may involve other ministries. Although many administrative interministerial committees exist formally, they do not effectively coordinate policy proposals or decision-making between ministries.

Under the Digitalization Plan for Public Administrations 2021–2025, all ministries must draft digital-transformation action plans to simplify interdepartmental working procedures, electronically exchange information, address information classification, and implement information exchange standards. The Digital Agenda 2026 fosters digital transformation of interministerial coordination, introducing a corporate data warehouse to break down information silos between various ministerial departments and creating a strategic framework for vertical inter-administrative coordination.

Civil servants exchange information across ministerial boundaries in their daily work at both the vertical and horizontal levels. The High Commission for Personnel and the National Institute for Public Administration provide incentives for interministerial exchange. However, specialized corps tend to aggravate administrative fragmentation, as each seeks to control a department according to its specialization, leading to a “silo” structure, where each ministry, department, agency, organism, or public entity follows its own operating logic.

Citation:  
Royal Decree 126/2022 of 15 February

## Switzerland

### Score 7

Not surprisingly, given the small number of ministries, there are no cabinet committees in Switzerland’s political system. However, there is considerable coordination, delegation and communication at the lower level of the federal government. Every minister is in a sense already a “ministerial committee” – representing the coordination of numerous cooperating departmental units.

Indeed, the Swiss political system employs several formalized coordination mechanisms across ministries to enhance policy coherence. These mechanisms include the collegiality, departmental and delegation principles within the federal government. These structured forms of coordination are essential for managing the complex and decentralized nature of the Swiss federal system, ensuring effective governance, and facilitating policy implementation (Ali et al., forthcoming).

The principle of collegiality implies that decisions should arise internally by consensus or, in exceptional cases, by majority. Each member of the Federal Council must support the decisions made, even if they have different personal or party-political viewpoints. This approach to decision-making promotes a form of

formalized coordination, ensuring that various political perspectives are considered and integrated into policy decisions. “Intra-executive collegialism” is one of the power-sharing institutional features intended to avoid the activation of veto mechanisms such as popular referendums further down the line (Mueller 2021). Collegiality has been put under strain in the past two decades due to increased party polarization, but is still a core feature of Swiss political life (Freiburghaus/Vatter 2019).

The departmental principle divides government business among the seven ministers. This principle allows each minister to express their political interests and beliefs in their policy decisions within their department. This organizational structure potentially creates an environment for both cooperation and conflict among departments, necessitating formalized coordination mechanisms to ensure policy coherence.

Formal delegation of policy issues to departments and their subsequent delegation to subordinated federal offices is another formalized coordination mechanism. This principle allows for a clear delineation of responsibilities and tasks among different government entities, facilitating coordination and coherent policy implementation.

The Federal Council has developed a strategy for information and communication technology within the federal administration. It uses digital technologies effectively to support interministerial coordination. However, the development and use of IT in the federal administration has experienced challenges with regard to efficiency and the appropriate use of fiscal resources. For example, the development of software for use in tax policy and administration has been heavily criticized by the Swiss Federal Audit Office. In cross-national comparison, Switzerland receives medium to low scores on e-government issues.

Citation:

Ali, A., Sager, F., and Trein, P. Forthcoming. “Coordination in a Loosely Coupled Core: Insights from Switzerland.” In *Coordination at the Core? Executive Decision-Making in International Organizations and the EU*, eds. Eymeri-Douzans, J.-M., Goransson, M., and Kassim, H.

<https://www.bakom.admin.ch/bakom/en/homepage/digital-switzerland-and-internet/strategie-digitale-schweiz.html>

Freiburghaus, R., and A. Vatter. 2019. “The Political Side of Consociationalism Reconsidered: Switzerland between a Polarized Parliament and Delicate Government Collegiality.” *Swiss Political Science Review* 25: 357-380. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12359>

Mueller, S. 2021. “The Politics of Compromise: Institutions and Actors of Power-Sharing in Switzerland.” In *Power-Sharing in Europe. Federalism and Internal Conflicts*, eds. S. Keil and A. McCulloch. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-53590-2\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-53590-2_4)

Schmid, J., Urben, M., and Vatter, A. 2018. “Cyberföderalismus in der Schweiz: Befunde zur Digitalisierung kantonaler Verwaltungen.” *Yearbook of Swiss Administrative Sciences* 9 (1): 12–24. <http://doi.org/10.5334/ssas.116https>

<https://www.egovernment.ch/de/aktuelles/medieninformationen/e-government-benchmark-der-eu-2021/>

## United Kingdom

**Score 7** Although the prime minister holds considerable power, it is somewhat paradoxical that their private office is usually relatively small and often reshaped when a new prime minister takes over. For instance, Boris Johnson's tenure saw multiple "resets" of his office. Instead, the Cabinet Office is the principal body responsible for policy coordination, with its head, the cabinet secretary, attending cabinet meetings. Traditionally, the cabinet secretary was also the head of the civil service, though this role was separated during the 2010s before being re-consolidated. HM Treasury also plays a more extensive coordinating role than many other finance ministries. The UK government faces a recurring dilemma: whether to "mainstream" an issue across all departments or to set up specific units to coordinate activities, such as for health inequalities or climate change. It has typically opted to establish units or departments to signal the importance of cross-cutting issues, rather than creating an overarching structure to support routine cross-departmental cooperation.

## Netherlands

**Score 6** Since the 2006 elections, politicians have called for a reduction in the number of civil servants. Early retirement schemes have led to a significant loss of substantive expertise. Moreover, sectoral expertise has not been considered an essential characteristic of departmental leadership. For instance, at the beginning of the pandemic and for much of its duration, the Ministry of Public Health had no medical experts among its top-level civil servants. This was corrected during the Rutte IV cabinet, when a gastroenterologist and former director of the Rotterdam Medical Center, one of the major COVID-19 policy advisers, was appointed minister of public health.

Equally if not more serious, as even the Council of State has warned, is the erosion of traditional loyalty and trust between (deputy) ministers and top-level officers. Ministers have increasingly turned to outside experts such as consultants, lobbyists and political trustees, breaking the monopoly formerly held by senior civil servants on providing policy-relevant information and advice. Last year, the Ministry of Economic Affairs spent 30% of its personnel budget on hiring outside experts. In response, top-level officers have adopted risk-averse and defensive behavior, specializing in process management and embracing Dutch variations of New Public Management (NPM) practices. Professor of Public Administration Noordegraaf evaluated the General Administrative Service (ABD), a pool of about 1,400 top civil service managers, and concluded that their high levels of career mobility – staying in their positions for an average of 4.3 years – may conflict with the development of substantial expertise. Consequently, it is no longer assumed that they are experts in their areas of responsibility. This undermines a core principle of good civil service, of championing a long-term perspective in opposition to the short-term outlook characteristic of politic cycles.

Recent departmental reorganizations have also been less than thoughtful. In 2010, the Rutte I government redefined the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK), which previously focused on administration, personnel and security. The security portfolio was transferred to the Ministry of Security and Justice (now Justice and Security), while the policy areas of housing and spatial planning from the dissolved Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment were added to BZK. This reorganization was implausible, as it brought housing and spatial planning under an administrative department and subordinated the police to the Ministry of Justice, violating the system of checks and balances. Another example is the transfer of agriculture to Economic Affairs and its subsequent reautonomization at the next cabinet formation, reflecting an ill-considered reorganization of the civil service.

As a result, the Netherlands received a below-average score in policymaking in the 2019 International Civil Service Effectiveness Index (InCiSE). There have been some attempts at improvement. After a reduction of the number of civil servants, their total numbers grew to 321,396 in 2022, an increase of 10,000 from 2021. New legislation often spurs but does not guarantee better coordination. The abolition of the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment is now being addressed through a comprehensive Environment Act (see also “Effective Sustainability Checks”). Additionally, although government agencies have previously been reluctant to share information, the Rathenau Institute has issued proposals for better embedding algorithmic decision-making into law, conducting proportionality tests, requiring human intervention and oversight, requiring careful monitoring, and establishing a Permanent Committee on Digital Affairs. The Rutte IV cabinet installed a minister with special duties in this area.

Citation:

Bekkers. 2022. “Leger rijksambtenaren groeide met 10.000 in 2021.” Binnenlands Bestuur, December 29.

Hamilton et al. 2022. “Hoe kan de Haagse bestuurscultuur daadwerkelijk veranderen?” Groene Amsterdammer, January 5.

NRC. 2023. “Algemene Rekenkamer: overheidsdiensten te terughoudend met uitwisselen van informatie.” Endedijk, March 30.

Rathenau Instituut. 2022. “Algoritmische besluitvorming. Handreiking aan de Eerste Kamer.”

Chavannes, De Correspondent. 2023. “Kunnen de overheid en de politiek dan niets meer?” De Correspondent May 27.

Van der Schoot. 2024. “Doemdenken en stemming maken over Omgevingswet.” Binnenlands Bestuur, January 8.

Ziesemer. 2023. “Zelfs de overheid vertrouwt de overheid niet meer.” De Correspondent August 8.

Platform O, Boersma. 2023. “De topambtelijke spagaat.”

## Sweden

### Score 6

Interministerial coordination has long been problematic in the Swedish system of government. Formally, the government and its departments operate as a collective actor. All decisions are made collectively, and there is no individual ministerial accountability. The PMO and the finance ministry play a significant role in this process. Additionally, when the government is a coalition, as has been the case since 2006, policies must be coordinated not only among the relevant departments but also among the governing parties (Jacobsson, Pierre, and Sundström, 2015).

Collective decision-making becomes even more complex in practice. Each department has a fair amount of autonomy in its respective sector. Coordination among departments occurs at different organizational levels, depending on whether the issue is technical and administrative or politically charged. With the latter, political actors make the final decisions.

Formal collaboration – a program that started in 2006 in the Government Offices of Sweden and has evolved to a broader partnership scheme – falls under the purview of Vinnova, Sweden’s innovation agency, with the latest strategy covering the period from 2019 – 2022. The scheme addresses four thematic areas: business climate change, skills supply and lifelong learning, health and life science, and business digital and structural transformation (Vinnova, 2021).

#### Citation:

Jacobsson, B., Pierre, J., and Sundström, G. 2015. *Governing the Embedded State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Vinnova. 2021. “Vinnova samordnar regeringens samverkansprogram.” <https://www.vinnova.se/m/regeringens-samverkansprogram>

## Israel

### Score 5

Interministerial coordination primarily occurs when an interministerial committee is established (Shatz et al. 2016). Such committees are usually created to promote specific programs, such as the committee for at-risk youth or the committee addressing violence in the Arab sector. Additionally, there is a forum for general directors, which aims to facilitate the exchange of information. This forum was very active under the previous government, but rarely meets under the current administration. One reason for this is that the current general director of the PMO, who is responsible for summoning the forum, does not do so.

When preparing a government decision, the respective ministry is mandated to consult and obtain the agreement of all ministries relevant to the decision’s implementation. This is another mechanism for information sharing and collaboration. The same is true for legislation drafted within a ministry. This practice usually allows for deliberation between ministries and the modification of proposals. Ministries do not have access to the digital platforms of other departments.

Job rotations occur regularly in the Ministry of Finance. In other ministries, employees can apply for positions in different ministries, but the decision is personal and there are no incentives for such shifts.

In most cases, ministries are not caught off guard by the policies of other ministries. Although there is no systematic coordination mechanism, there are consultations and information sharing between individuals. However, there are instances where conflicts arise between departments due to a lack of coordination.

Citation:

Shatz, H., Popper, S., Friedrich, S., Abramzon, S., Brodsky, A., Harel, R., and Cohen, O. 2016. *Developing Long-Term Socioeconomic Strategy in Israel: Institutions, Processes, and Supporting Information*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation. <https://doi.org/10.7249/RR275>

## Japan

Score 5

Japanese ministries are characterized by strong sectionalism focused on competition for funds and power. Civil servants follow fixed career paths in the ministry that hired them. As a result, intra-ministerial trust and coordination is high, but it may hinder the exchange of information and identification of synergies across ministries. Within ministries, most decisions are made in a bottom-up manner through the round-robin (*ringi*) system. Bureaucrats from different ministries occasionally establish working teams for coordination on important policy initiatives, but coordination is mostly conducted on an informal level. For that reason, competitive policy initiatives by different ministries are common.

Cabinet meetings have traditionally been treated as mere get-togethers to sign documents. Until 2009, they were always preceded by meetings of the administrative vice-ministers representing all ministries, presided over by the administrative deputy chief cabinet secretary – the highest-ranking bureaucrat among civil servants. Only the decisions authorized by this organ could be submitted for the cabinet's approval. The Administrative Vice-Ministers' Liaison Council, which replaced these meetings in 2012, is now only intended for interministerial discussions on how to implement cabinet decisions. Most policy coordination is now conducted by the Cabinet Secretariat (*Kantei*) in a top-down manner.

Digitalization of government services has been ongoing since the establishment of the Digital Agency in September 2021. One aim is to improve data linkage between governmental institutions. However, so far, digitalization has focused mostly on government-to-citizen rather than government-to-government systems. Plans include migration of local government IT systems onto a central government data cloud and the introduction of public service meshes to facilitate information sharing between various institutions. Both have yet to be fully implemented.

Citation:

Cavanaugh, Luke. 2023. "What Next for Japan's Digital Agency After the My Number Misfire?" <https://thediplomat.com/2023/10/what-next-for-japans-digital-agency-after-the-my-number-misfire/>

Mishimi, Ko. 2014. "A Big Bang for Japanese Mandarins? The Civil Service Reform of 2014." *International Journal of Public Administration* 40 (13): 1101–1113.

Zakowski, Karol. 2021. *Gradual Institutional Change in Japan. Kantei Leadership under the Abe Administration*. London – New York: Routledge.

## United States

Score 5

Historically, federal government departments have established their own policy autonomy and operate fairly independently from other departments. Departmental autonomy was seen as a major initiative of strong departmental leaders, and this instinct still operates today (Carpenter 2001).

Once appointed, agency leaders tend to stay in place for at least the political lifecycle of their appointer. A department might see just one or two leaders over a four-year presidential term. For example, despite the personnel difficulties of the Trump administration, Trump had the same secretaries of the Treasury, Agriculture, Commerce, Housing, Transportation, Education, and Trade for his full four-year presidency. State, Interior, Health, and Energy had just one change during his presidency. It is difficult for presidents to reshuffle their Cabinets because Senate approval is required for any new appointment, including moving an already confirmed departmental head to another department (e.g., from Education to Health). This gives department leaders greater staying power, even when the president might have some buyer's remorse in appointing them to a position (Jenkins and Milkis 2014).

The Executive Office of the President (EOP), created during the 1930s reforms to the federal government bureaucracy, serves as a crucial coordinating institution at the core of the federal government. The EOP provides the president and his White House team with the capacity to develop policy and produce broad administration initiatives. However, much of the actual policymaking occurs within individual departments, and cross-department coordination is variable and sometimes quite weak (Skowronek et al. 2021).

The Biden administration released its President's Management Agenda (PMA) in 2021, which defines government-wide management priorities for all federal agencies. The PMA is designed to support progress and opportunities beyond the reach of any single federal agency.

Citation:

Stephen Skowronek, John Dearborn, and Desmond King. 2021. *Phantoms of a Beleaguered Republic: The Deep State and the Unitary Executive*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jeffrey Jenkins and Sidney Milkis. 2014. "Introduction: The Rise of a Policy State?" In *The Politics of Major Policy Reform in Postwar America*, eds. Jeffrey Jenkins and Sidney Milkis. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Daniel Carpenter. 2001. *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy: Reputations, Networks, and Policy Innovation in Executive Agencies, 1862-1928*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

## Ireland

### Score 4

Constitutionally, the Irish government is expected to work collectively, with each minister responsible for all governmental decisions. This collective doctrine fosters cohesion and encourages close coordination and communication. However, evidence shows that silo mindsets persist within ministries, and communication between departments and the national government is often weak. This is particularly evident in the lack of integration between policy areas such as food, agriculture and environmental policy, as well as spatial planning, transport planning and emissions reduction (O'Mahony and Torney 2023). The same issues are noted in priority policy areas like housing and health.

The Government Legislation Committee (GLC) includes the government chief whip, the attorney general, the program managers of the main parties in government, the leader of Seanad Éireann, the chief parliamentary counsel, and representatives of the Department of the Taoiseach (DoT) and the Office of Parliamentary Counsel (OPC). The process for discussing policy proposals is outlined in the Cabinet Handbook and the Programme for Government document. However, no definitive committee structure is prescribed, and many practices are ad hoc. The current 10 committees have an average of 6 to 13 members, while the coordination committee includes the leaders of each party in government, the secretary-general of the government and nominated advisers to the party leaders. Other ministers, advisers and officials may be invited to attend.

Informal conversations with senior civil servants suggest that digital technologies are commonly used for sharing documents, especially in policy development. IT systems are employed by the Cabinet Secretariat at the DoT to send memos for government comments. Civil servant mobility is encouraged at all levels, and the Senior Public Service has a scheme for senior staff. Secondments in public service reforms are also available. However, insularity in the public service may hinder the evolution of practices and knowledge. Over 80% of top-level public service appointments have been filled by internal applicants in recent years, with 85% of those recommended for employment coming from the civil service, 15% from the wider public service, and almost none from the private sector, despite 50% of applications coming from outside the civil service and 30% from the private sector.

Despite initiatives to enhance coordination, O'Riordan and Boyle (2023) conclude that significant institutional development is necessary for the public sector to facilitate cross-departmental and cross-institutional information exchange. Senior civil servants confirm that achieving policy coherence is challenging due to the lack of incentives for interministerial coordination, while individual actions are rewarded. The Bioeconomy Implementation Group Review of 2021 found inconsistencies in governmental thinking about integrating the bioeconomy into different policies. Efforts at policy coherence, particularly in climate action and sustainability, often

focus on negative trade-offs. Knowledge of options for systemic change, significant positive synergies and the opportunities they present is typically absent from national policymaking processes in Ireland and from supporting analysis (O'Mahony and Torney 2023).

Citation:

Irish Government. 2023. "Bioeconomy Policy." <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a1bb6-bioeconomy-policy/#>  
 O'Riordan, J., and R. Boyle. 2023. "Governance of Reform in the Irish Public Service." *Administration* 71 (3): 11-33. <https://doi.org/10.2478/admin-2023-0015>  
 Boyle, Richard, F. O'Leary, and J. O'Neill. 2022. *Public Sector Trends*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.  
 Health Manager. 2023. "Government to Establish Interdepartmental Working Groups to Examine the Rising Cost of Health-Related Claims." <https://healthmanager.ie/2023/03/government-to-establish-interdepartmental-working-group-to-examine-the-rising-cost-of-health-related-claims/>  
 O'Mahony and Torney. 2023. *Transforming Development: Economy, Innovation and Finance*, Chapter 6. Volume 4 of Irish Climate Change Assessment. [https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring-assessment/climate-change/ICCA\\_Volume-4.pdf](https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring-assessment/climate-change/ICCA_Volume-4.pdf)

## Slovakia

Score 3

The only formal bodies visible through the online search responsible for interministerial coordination are the Councils of the Government. These councils (23 in total) have an advisory role, with most having sectoral responsibilities. A few exhibit cross-sectoral characteristics, such as the Council of Government of the Recovery and Resilience Plan. No specific digital technologies facilitate interministerial coordination. Work-related incentives are formally available but rarely used. RIA and other formal pre-consultation procedures do not provide sufficient incentives for identifying synergies and opportunities. The Government Office focuses on draft bills' legal and technical coherence but lacks the capacity and sectoral expertise to evaluate their policy content. The legislative process encourages negative coordination by providing comments on draft laws. The current situation is not evaluated by any academic or other official online text, but the relatively old evaluation by Staroňová (2007) remains valid. Staroňová (2007, 120) states, "Coordination takes place only after the legislation is developed during the formal review process in the adoption phase of legislation (the so-called 'commenting period') and follows a very formal sequencing as stipulated in the Legislative Rules.... In general, there is a strong sense that ministries are autonomous organizations."

Citation:

Staroňová, K. 2007. "Executive Leadership and Policy Management System: The Case of Slovakia." In *Strategic Policy Making in Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. M. Brusis, K. Staroňová, and R. Zubek. Bratislava: NISPAcee, 117-134.

## Indicator Complementary Informal Coordination

Question How effectively do informal coordination mechanisms complement formal mechanisms of interministerial coordination?

30 OECD and EU countries are sorted according to their performance on a scale from 10 (best) to 1 (lowest). This scale is tied to four qualitative evaluation levels.

- 10-9 = Informal coordination mechanisms complement formal mechanisms of interministerial coordination.
- 8-6 = In most cases, informal coordination mechanisms complement formal mechanisms of interministerial coordination.
- 5-3 = In some cases, informal coordination mechanisms undermine formal mechanisms of interministerial coordination.
- 2-1 = Informal coordination mechanisms undermine formal mechanisms of interministerial coordination.

### Australia

Score 9 Regular informal meetings between agency staff at different levels (though especially at higher ranks), through a variety of forums, support interministerial cooperation. These activities do not undermine the formal coordination efforts within the bureaucracy or at ministerial level.

### Belgium

Score 9 Apart from official coordination via the PMO, Belgium has a robust unofficial coordination system through two channels: first, ministers' teams ("ministerial cabinets") are composed of experts from at least two parties (though most are close to the minister's party). Second, political parties are very strong and align the actions of all politicians and their teams within the same party. Between formal and informal arrangements, the PMO enforces additional policy coordination across line ministries through meetings with various ministers' political advisers. The chief of staff within the prime minister's political cabinet plays a crucial role in policy coordination.

Citation:

Opdrachten | FOD Kanselarij van de Eerste Minister. <https://www.kanselarij.belgium.be/nl/opdrachten>  
<https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=19946&langId=en>

### Estonia

Score 9 Two different forms exist to communicate line ministries' proposals to the GO. First, all policy initiatives are discussed in the coalition council. Second, the cabinet informally examines all substantial issues at its weekly meetings. No binding

decisions are made in these meetings; the main function is to exchange information and prepare for formal government sessions.

Informal coordination, especially considering the small size of the country, plays an important role in ensuring efficient policymaking. In addition to contacts between high-ranking civil servants in ministries, the coalition committee and governing bodies of political parties are crucial in garnering support from coalition partners. However, while the Estonia 2035 long-term development strategy sets strategic goals, including a focus on governance, it lacks implementation plans and targets for government coordination.

## Finland

### Score 9

Intersectoral coordination has generally been perceived as an important issue in Finnish politics, but few institutional mechanisms have been introduced. One of these is the Iltakoulu (evening session), an informal weekly meeting between ministers to discuss and prepare key matters for the government's plenary session the following day. Additionally, there are other informal government meetings, and items can also be referred to informal ministerial working groups. Coordination therefore proceeds effectively through informal mechanisms.

Recent large-scale policy programs have enhanced intersectoral policymaking. Furthermore, Finland's membership in the European Union has necessitated increased interministerial coordination. Recent research in Finland has focused only tangentially on informal mechanisms, but various case studies suggest that the system of coordination by advisory councils has performed well.

Citation:

Eero Murto. 2016. "Power Relationship Between Ministers and Civil Servants." In *The Changing Balance of Political Power in Finland*, eds. Lauri Karvonen, Heikki Paloheimo and Tapio Raunio. Stockholm: Santérus Förlag, 189-208.

## Greece

### Score 9

While horizontal coordination in Greece has traditionally been informal, it has become more formalized since the adoption of the 2019 law on government organization. The establishment of the Presidency of the Government and the creation of "Coordination Services" within each ministry have reduced the need for informal coordination, limiting the opportunities for individual ministers to pursue their own policy agendas.

However, during periods of crisis, such as the wildfires in the summer of 2022 and the floods in the summer of 2023, informal coordination did occur. This involved not only the Government Office but also ministers without portfolio who work closely

with the prime minister. In 2023–2024, there were three such ministers and three deputy ministers who worked in close coordination with the prime minister and among themselves, taking on various supervisory roles. This team was particularly cohesive, as its members had worked together during the previous term of the New Democracy party (2019–2023).

In summary, informal coordination mechanisms effectively complement formal ones.

Citation:

The change in government organization in 2019 took place through Law 4622/2019.

The team of government ministers without portfolio is announced in the official website of the prime minister: <https://www.government.gov.gr/kivernisi/>

## Latvia

Score 9

In Latvia, the effectiveness of informal coordination mechanisms in complementing formal interministerial coordination depends on the frequency and regularity of informal meetings, as well as their impact on formal coordination efforts.

The political parties forming the government meet in cooperation meetings (previously known as Coalition Council). Cooperation meetings are not regulated by law but are based on a mutual agreement between the political parties. The Coalition Cooperation Agreement, a political agreement, articulates and defines the basic principles of cooperation. Currently, cooperation meetings are held weekly on Mondays. Between the beginning of 2022 and the end of 2023, approximately 130 cooperation meetings have been held (Ministru kabinets, 2023).

The government led by Evika Siliņa has a cooperation agreement emphasizing the need to enhance the functionality and professionalism of the Cabinet of Ministers. This agreement includes the formation of cabinet committees and requires the involvement of ministers or parliamentary secretaries from pertinent ministries in thematic committees organized by the prime minister (14. Saeimas frakciju sadarbības līgums, 2023). This structure ensures practical interministerial cooperation and streamlined decision-making throughout the 14th Saeima. Thus, this applies to the coordination between the GO/PMO and the line ministries, as well as within the ministerial bureaucracy.

In addition, Latvia has a standard practice of organizing formal and informal working groups to discuss issues among ministries.

Citation:

Ministru kabinets. 2023. “Notikumu kalendārs.” <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/notikumu-kalendars?title=Vald%C4%ABbu%20veidojo%C5%A1o%20partiju%20Sadarb%C4%ABas%20san%C4%81ksme&page=13>

Latvijas Republikas Ministru kabineta veidojošo 14. Saeimas frakciju sadarbības līgums. 2023. <https://static.lsm.lv/documents/1sq.pdf>

## Norway

### Score 9

Norwegian politics is best characterized as consensus-driven rather than partisan and confrontational. A symbolic expression of this is the seating arrangement in parliament, where members are seated by geography rather than by party affiliation. The political system's capacity to forge broad policy compromises on important issues is significant. Examples include a radical pension reform, the system of value-added and income taxes, foreign policy, and the decision to accumulate state income from the oil and gas sector into one of the world's largest sovereign wealth funds. Another example is the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, where there was broad consensus across the political spectrum to provide sufficient economic support for both corporations and unemployed citizens during the crisis.

Informal meetings between party leaders from different ideological backgrounds are not formalized but still occur frequently when national compromises are needed.

Meetings between ministers largely take place in formal settings, particularly during the weekly government conferences.

#### Citation:

OECD. 2022. "Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions in Norway." *Building Trust in Public Institutions*. OECD Publishing, Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/81b01318-en>

Regjeringen.no. 2014. "Regjeringen i arbeid." <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/om-regjeringa/slik-blir-norge-styrt/regjeringen-i-arbeid-2/id2001100/>

## Switzerland

### Score 9

The Swiss political system, being a consensus democracy with characteristics of consociationalism, involves a complex interplay of formal and informal coordination mechanisms. This implies the presence of deliberative processes in which compromises are made between interest groups, political parties and other stakeholders. This in turn suggests that informal mechanisms play a significant role in the decision-making process. Such informal mechanisms involve less formalized but still significant processes such as ad hoc meetings, personal networks and behind-the-scenes negotiations, all of which complement the formal structures. As the Swiss system includes strong neocorporatist features, informal governance processes also involve key players that are historically strongly integrated into Switzerland's policymaking processes – especially in the pre-parliamentary phase – such as umbrella associations representing the business sector (Mach et al. 2019). This raises questions regarding the equality of access by various interest and citizen groups to the decision-making system.

Indeed, given the small size of the federal administration and the country's tradition of informal coordination, strong and effective informal coordination continues to take place. Political coordination among the high ranks of the administration can be

rather intense, although the limited capacity and time of the Federal Council members, as well as their diverging interests, create practical bottlenecks.

Citation:

Ali, A., Sager, F., and Trein, P. Forthcoming. "Coordination in a Loosely Coupled Core: Insights from Switzerland." In *Coordination at the Core? Executive Decision-Making in International Organizations and the EU*, eds. J-M. Eymeri-Douzans, M. Goransson, and H. Kassim.

Mach, A., Varone, F., and Eichenberger, S. 2020. "Transformations of Swiss Neo-Corporatism: From Pre-Parliamentary Negotiations Toward Privileged Pluralism in the Parliamentary Venue." In *The European Social Model under Pressure*, eds. Careja, R., Emmenegger, P., and Giger, N. Wiesbaden: Springer VS. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-27043-8\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-27043-8_4)

Mavrot, Céline, and Fritz Sager. 2018. "Vertical Epistemic Communities in Multilevel Governance." *Policy & Politics* 46 (3): 391-407.

## Austria

Score 8

Before government bills can be formally considered at cabinet meetings, they need to be agreed upon by the governing coalition parties. These negotiations occur at different levels. Typically, the department primarily responsible for drafting a government bill collaborates with a department under the political control of the coalition partner (Schieder and Schmidt 2023). For example, in the current ÖVP-Green government, the minister of justice, Alma Zadić (Green), often cooperates with the minister for constitutional affairs, Karoline Edtstadler (ÖVP). If no direct counterpart exists for a given department, the department responsible for preparing the bill will coordinate with the coalition partner's spokesperson for a particular policy field in the Nationalrat.

When most issues have been settled between the coalition parties, bills are forwarded to the coalition's coordination group, which – as of late 2023 – includes members from the ministerial cabinets of Finance Minister Magnus Brunner (ÖVP) and Vice-Chancellor Werner Kogler (Grüne). As this coordination process proceeds, other "pairs" representing both sides will be involved, such as the press spokespersons, the chiefs of the political cabinets of the chancellor and vice-chancellor, and the parliamentary party group leaders of both governing parties in the Nationalrat. Sometimes, the chancellor or vice-chancellor will personally attend meetings.

The coordination group typically meets on Mondays or Tuesdays. Both governing parties also convene separately for informal discussions behind closed doors immediately before scheduled cabinet meetings.

Overall, the informal elements of this coordination clearly tend to support rather than challenge or undermine the more formal coordination efforts.

Citation:

Sandra Schieder and Colette M. Schmidt. 2023. "Inside Ministerrat: Ein Blick hinter die Kulissen eines wöchentlichen Regierungsrituals." <https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000186930/inside-ministerrat-ein-blick-hinter-die-kulissen-eines-woechentlichen-regierungsrituals>

## Canada

Score 8 Many informal venues exist. In some cases, these are thought to enhance formal mechanisms; in others, they undermine them. However, very little is known about them, as they escape review through lobbying and other registration systems (Sarpkaya 1988; Hogan et al. 2009).

There are numerous and frequent informal mechanisms for interministerial coordination. Senior officials, managers, and front-line operational personnel regularly engage in bilateral and multilateral meetings and coordination. These interactions are often issue-dependent and typically take place when preparing policy and program changes for Cabinet consideration, but they may also address specific programmatic challenges.

Citation:

Hogan, John, Raj S. Chari, and Gary Murphy. 2009. "Lobbying Regulation Across Four Continents: Promoting Transparency?" SSRN eLibrary. [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1450816&](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1450816&)

Sarpkaya, S. 1988. *Lobbying in Canada – Ways and Means*. Don Mills: CCH Canadian Ltd.

## Denmark

Score 8 Given that Danish governments are typically either minority or coalition governments (or both), informal contact and coordination are important. The country's consensus-driven political tradition means this also applies to contacts with opposition parties and interest groups, particularly employer and employee organizations that play an important role in shaping labor market and collective bargaining issues. Tripartite agreements are frequent in this context.

Informal mechanisms can enhance the efficiency of formal meetings; however, crucial decisions must be confirmed in more formal settings. At the political level, informal mechanisms are likely more important than formal ones (Christiansen et al 2022).

Furthermore, there is an exchange of employees between ministries, trade associations and municipalities, ensuring that informal networks are formed (VIVE 2022). However, recent work also suggests that leaders are more likely to change sectors than to change levels of government, for instance by moving from a leadership position in a municipality to taking a job in a ministry.

Citation:

Christiansen, Peter Munk, Asbjørn Sonne Nørgaard and Rikke Berg. 2022. *Politik og forvaltning*. København: Hans Reitzel.

VIVE. 2022. "Ledermobilitet. Afdækning af motiver og barrierer." <https://www.vive.dk/da/udgivelser/ledermobilitet-bxqk2qxk>

## France

### Score 8

Informal coordination is generally efficient in achieving coherence in the government's communication. More than his predecessors, President Macron has used the format of a "government seminar" to prepare for key events, such as the preparation of the new government plan for action in summer 2022. Governments commonly refer to ad hoc committees tasked with providing information on crucial issues. In rare cases, a report is requested from a single person. Committee members are mainly high-level civil servants, former or active politicians, or academics, and are often chosen based on their sympathy for the government in office at the time. Most reports are made public, but a few remain unpublished, particularly when the report's proposals appear too provocative to be accepted by social partners.

More generally, most decisions with high political stakes lead to informal consultation organized by the president or the prime minister. Recently, the presidential party has generally been considered to be too weak to extend beyond the role of transmitter of the executive's instructions. Yet the situation of minority government since 2022 has shed new light on informal consultations with other parties – mostly in this case with the Republicans. The pension reform and the bill on immigration demonstrated how complex such negotiations can be.

A crucial factor and essentially an invisible coordination mechanism is the "old-boy network" built by former students from the elitist "grandes écoles" (École Nationale d'Administration (ENA), École Polytechnique, Mines, ParisTech, etc.), or by members of the same "grands corps" (prestigious bureaucracies such as Inspection Générale des Finances, the diplomatic services, the Council of State and so on). Most ministries (except perhaps the least powerful or those considered as marginal) include one or several persons from this high civil servant super-elite who know each other or are bound by informal bonds of solidarity. These high civil servants – especially "énarques" from ENA – also work in the PMO and the president's office, further strengthening this informal connection. The system is efficient but lacks transparency, from a procedural point of view (Gervais 2022). Reform of the ENA, which has now been transformed into the Institut National du Service Public (INSP), as well as the "grands corps," leading toward more professional experience before accessing this body, may change the situation in the long run (Gally 2022). In the short term, no visible effect has been perceptible beyond the protests of those directly concerned.

#### Citation:

Gally, N. 2022. "Le marché des hauts fonctionnaires: de l'ENA à l'INSP." *Esprit* 6: 105-113.

Gervais, J. 2022. *L'impératif managérial: désirs privés et devoirs publics d'un grand corps d'Etat*. Lille: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion.

## Lithuania

**Score 8** In most cases, informal coordination mechanisms complement formal mechanisms of interministerial coordination. Sometimes these informal meetings are organized between representatives of political parties that form the ruling coalition with the goal of aligning positions on sensitive or divisive policy issues, such as tax reform.

The coalition government formed in 2020 relied mostly on informal coordination between the coalition partners until June 2023, when the three ruling parties decided to establish a Coalition Council. This council was subsequently used as a forum for discussing the draft budget for 2024 and other matters important to the coalition parties.

Informal meetings are also used to coordinate positions between the prime minister and the president. Sometimes these meetings occur regularly, but most of the time they depend on the political situation and policy agenda. Approaching elections often affect the routines of such informal coordination, as political competition reduces the incentives for it.

## New Zealand

**Score 8** Informal coordination mechanisms often complement formal interministerial coordination, contributing to the effectiveness of overall government operations. Informal coordination can take various forms, including ad hoc collaboration between ministries, bilateral meetings between high-ranking officials, and consultations between ministers from different coalition parties. The Cabinet Manual – the formal guidelines that govern procedures for government decision-making – explicitly promotes informal coordination by encouraging ministers and government agencies to seek informal advice from the Legislation Design and Advisory Committee during the early stages of the policy drafting process (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2023).

Citation:

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. 2023. "Cabinet Manual." <https://www.dpmc.govt.nz/our-business-units/cabinet-office/supporting-work-cabinet/cabinet-manual>

## Spain

**Score 8** When interministerial problems cannot be solved through informal contacts, meetings between officials from the involved ministries are organized, often relying on the fact that senior civil servants belong to the same specialized corps or share a network of former colleagues. To foster informal mechanisms within the coalition

cabinet, meetings of the heads of ministers' private offices were introduced, although their communication flow is limited.

Informal meetings across various levels of government are frequent. Several sectoral conferences have established working groups to foster vertical informal coordination and support formal coordination. In the context of the coalition government, these informal arenas have become very useful, but their effectiveness depends on the ministers' personality and political status. For example, they could not avoid the internal controversy and cabinet division over the law on sexual abuse, leading to Podemos' cabinet ministers voting against their own government in parliament.

## United Kingdom

### Score 8

Flexibility and informal meetings are key features of the UK government system, allowing it to respond uniquely to different situations. This approach is highly valued and is an essential component of prime ministerial government in the UK. Formally, civil servants take notes on informal meetings between ministers. The ongoing inquiry into the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic has documented coordination issues, highlighting the proliferation of WhatsApp groups and raising questions about how they were monitored and recorded.

Cabinet committees provide opportunities for seeking agreement among relevant ministries and feed into the full cabinet or 10 Downing Street. A distinctive feature of the UK system is that cabinet committees can be radically reconfigured by the prime minister and can change rapidly in response to events and the prime minister's preferences. For example, during the pandemic, four new committees were established, taking the number under the Johnson administration to 20. Liz Truss, during her brief tenure, reduced the number to six, and under Sunak, it has increased to 11.

The government can also establish interministerial groups, which, according to the Institute for Government, "cannot take binding decisions but can support policy development and decision-making where collective cabinet agreement is not required." Although not binding on the cabinet, these groups are approved by the prime minister and can be used to shape policy.

Informal coordination also arises from regular monthly meetings of the Civil Service Board (CSB), chaired by the Chief Operating Officer of the Civil Service and comprising selected permanent secretaries (the top civil servant in a ministry). A complementary Civil Service Shadow Board (CSSB), consisting of members from grades below the Senior Civil Service, provides different perspectives on the issues discussed at the CSB. The CSSB reviews papers going to the CSB in advance of each monthly meeting, and its representatives attend the CSB meetings to contribute their views in person.

The UK usually has single-party government, so informal meetings of party groups are not a significant factor. However, factions within the ruling party can meet and attempt to exert influence at full party meetings.

Whether these processes support or undermine formal coordination is context-specific, making a single answer to this question challenging. The UK COVID-19 inquiry has also resurfaced criticisms from devolved governments regarding what they perceive as an excessive reliance on informal mechanisms at the expense of proper use of formal mechanisms for intergovernmental relations, such as the Joint Ministerial Committee (Henderson 2023).

Citation:

<https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainer/cabinet-committees#:~:text=How%20Has%20The%20Number%20of%20Cabinet%20Committees%20Changed%20Over%20time?>

Henderson, A. 2023. "Expert report to UK Covid-19 Inquiry (INQ000269372)." <https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/documents/inq000269372-expert-report-of-professor-ailsa-henderson-titled-devolution-and-the-uks-response-to-covid-19-dated-07-september-2023/>

## Germany

Score 7

Informal coordination mechanisms complement formal interministerial coordination. The most important informal meeting often occurs in the coalition committee, which consists of the chancellor, the vice-chancellor, and the heads of each party in the coalition ("Koalitionsvertrag 2021," 2021). In general, informal meetings support formal coordination between the chancellery and line ministries.

The informal meetings between the head of the chancellery and the state secretaries reportedly resolve many intergovernmental disagreements before they reach more formal channels (Busse and Hofmann, 2019; Hebestreit and Korte, 2022). These informal coordination processes seem to be less effective in the current coalition than in previous governments (Deutschlandfunk 2023).

Citation:

Deutschlandfunk. 2023. "Knatsch-Koalition. Warum die Ampel so oft streitet." <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/koalition-ampel-streit-100.html>

Hebestreit, R., and K.-R. Korte. 2022. "The Executive: The German Government and Civil Service." In *The Oxford Handbook of German Politics*, eds. K. Larres, H. Moroff, and R. Wittlinger. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Koalitionsvertrag. 2021. [www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/koalitionsvertrag-2021-1990800](http://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/koalitionsvertrag-2021-1990800)

## Hungary

Score 7

The strong top-down formal role of Prime Minister Orbán and his Prime Minister's Office is complemented by informal coordination mechanisms. As power concentration has increased in the fourth Orbán government, so has the role of informal decision-making. Orbán regularly gathers officials from his larger circle to

issue instructions. In effect, formal mechanisms only serve to legalize and implement the prime minister's improvised and hastily made decisions.

From the bottom-up perspective, civil servants have very limited capacity to influence policymaking either formally or informally. Given the high level of politicization in Hungary and the high levels of patronage and political control over the bureaucracy, any deviation from the core government's line is perilous. In small groups, mind guards are often present.

As a consequence, self-censorship and groupthink occur regularly. Informal "coordination" exists through top-down channels through which the core government makes it clear to civil servants where the political will is situated, often without issuing formal orders, as such orders might be legally questionable. As a result, much of the fragmentary informal coordination is defunct. It does not improve the quality of policymaking but hinders the implementation of objectively preferable solutions to problems. Information between the political and implementation-oriented spheres of public administration under the Orbán government flows only unidirectionally and through legal texts rather than personal interaction (European Commission 2018). The problem is not that informal communication negatively impacts administrative procedures, but vice versa.

## Ireland

### Score 7

McCarthy (2021) suggests that the scope for discretion in Irish policymaking is limited by external opportunities. For example, innovation in Ireland has been closely linked to international opportunities, with successful foreign direct investment becoming the de facto national system of innovation. This reliance on external investment has resulted in a persistently weak national system of innovation, rather than fostering a self-sustaining one. Path dependency further limits innovation and foresight, as previous decisions on the same topic often significantly influence current policy decisions. This dependency can also constrain implementation capacity, as the available institutions and instruments shape policy choices. For instance, confidence in the capacity of the Revenue Commissioners, and a lack of confidence in other potential channels, may determine whether a tax or social welfare mechanism is used, leading to specific (mal)distribution outcomes.

The necessary combination of capacity and opportunity for foresight should be the particular responsibility of the civil service, which serves as the locus of independent policy advice to the government. The civil service needs to foster a diverse and flourishing network of policy analysis. This role requires technical proficiency, creativity, and cultural openness. It also means engaging with officials, analysts and activists who have direct access to the lived experiences of those affected by policy and are fluent in the language of formal policy development.

There is no published data about informal high-level meetings. However, Irish social and political culture is known for a certain level of informality. Government and civil service officials often find it useful to be able to reach out informally to contacts who can help them or refer them to the appropriate person (as noted by Richard Boyle and L. Shannon in public administration and government studies). While no data is available on the extent and nature of informal meetings, this culture of being able to “pick up the phone” is positively viewed among government and civil service staff.

Citation:

McCarthy, D. 2021. “Foreword.” In J. Hogan and M. P. Murphy, eds., *Policy Analysis in Ireland*, xix-xxii. Bristol: Policy Press.

NESC. September 2023. *Is Ireland Thriving? Answers from International Assessments*. Report number 32.

## Israel

**Score 7** Informal meetings between officials occur frequently. For instance, they happen before and after weekly cabinet meetings, in the Knesset when officials attend committee sessions, and when parties convene. These meetings occur at all levels, among ministers, general directors, and finance directors across various ministries and the Ministry of Finance. Such meetings help coordinate policies. However, informal meetings are typically held to solve problems, complementing rather than replacing formal coordination mechanisms.

## Italy

**Score 7** Informal meetings are common in the policymaking process. There are regular meetings between the heads of ministerial cabinets as well as between the political parties that make up the ruling majority. Due to the regionalized nature of the Italian political system, meetings between different levels of government – ministries, regions, and municipalities – are ongoing.

Generally, most of these informal meetings are organized to help coordinate efforts at all levels. These meetings are also believed to eliminate many technical issues that could lead to political problems.

## Japan

**Score 7** There is a dense network of informal coordination centered on the ruling party which complements the formal coordination procedures among bureaucrats. Before submission to the Diet, all legislative initiatives are subject to advance screening (jizen shinsa) within the LDP, which has enjoyed almost uninterrupted status as Japan’s dominant party since 1955. The temporary suspension of this system under the rule of the Democratic Party of Japan (2009 – 2012) greatly disturbed

interministerial coordination processes, but the LDP returned to the old practices after returning to power in 2012.

Advance screening takes place regularly in LDP's policy divisions corresponding to different ministries. Bureaucrats explain the contents of bill proposals to LDP backbenchers and promote different projects among the members of the *zoku* – so-called parliamentary tribes – informal groups of politicians specializing in a given legislative field. The “tribes” represent various interest groups and enjoy considerable veto power in the ruling party, though their influence on the decision-making process weakened under the second Abe administration (2012 – 2020). In theory, decisions of the LDP Policy Research Council and the General Council are made by majority vote, although usually politicians strive for consensus. Under this system, the government would frequently have to make far-reaching concessions to LDP backbenchers. In response, Prime Minister Abe established new intra-party bodies under the LDP president's direct control to circumvent these constraints. Prime Minister Kishida, however, has been less skillful in using institutional instruments to outmaneuver veto players.

Citation:

Iio, Jun. 2008. *Nihon no Tōchi Kōzō* [Structure of Government in Japan]. Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Shinsha.

Zakowski, Karol. 2021. *Gradual Institutional Change in Japan: Kantei Leadership under the Abe Administration*. London: Routledge.

## Portugal

Score 7

Informal coordination mechanisms play a pivotal role in the functioning and coordination of the Portuguese government. At the highest levels of government, two primary informal coordination mechanisms are employed:

**Regular Coordination Meetings:** These meetings take place weekly, typically on Mondays, and involve the prime minister's inner circle. The composition may vary with changes in government but usually includes the minister of the presidency, the minister of finance, the minister of parliamentary affairs, and two additional ministers chosen by the prime minister for political insights. Additionally, the president of the prime minister's political party and the leader of the parliamentary group, who sometimes are the same individual, also participate.

**Occasional Coordination Meetings:** These meetings occur on an as-needed basis, bringing together a sectoral minister with the Office of the Prime Minister or the minister of the presidency. If the policy under consideration has financial implications, the minister of finance is also invited. These bilateral or trilateral discussions do not follow a fixed schedule but take place whenever a line ministry proposes a significant legislative initiative. These informal horizontal connections between ministries serve to compensate for the absence or rigidity of formal horizontal links.

When examining the relationship between top government officials and political parties, the absolute majority government of the Socialist Party (January 2022 – April 2024) has enabled the passage of legislation independently of other political parties. This implies that coordination primarily occurs within the Socialist Party, reducing the significance of informal coordination with other political parties. Nevertheless, even with an absolute majority government, dialogue with minor parties may still be pursued on special and crucial occasions, such as budget discussions and approval in parliament, to broaden support for the budget.

## Slovenia

### Score 7

Informal communication often occurs away from the public eye, happening daily in person, via emails and telephone conversations, or during various meetings and events. Informal discussions and coffee mornings between party leaders are common practices that influence the dynamics of processes and relationships between participants. The media is informed about such meetings only when a problem arises and a decision is expected from the prime minister.

For instance, during a disagreement within the Social Democratic Party, the party leader met with the prime minister individually, while the minister of justice also met separately with the prime minister. Additionally, a scandal involving the role of the general secretaries of political parties in ministerial duties revealed that the general secretaries of all three coalition parties met weekly to coordinate policy, personnel, and programs.

#### Citation:

Top news 2024: Matjaž Han: “Od predsednika vlade pričakujem, da jo bo razrešil” – Kaj sledi, če se premier na bo odločil za razrešitev ministrice? <https://topnews.si/2024/01/31/video-matjaz-han-od-predsednika-vlade-pricakujem-da-jo-bo-razresil-kaj-sledi-ce-se-premier-na-bo-odlocil-za-razresitev-ministrice/>

Alenka Krašovec and Tomaž Krpič. 2024. “Slovenia: Newcomers as Prime Ministers. A New Mode of Coalition Governance?” In Torbjorn Bergman, Gabriella Ilonszki, and Johan Hellstrom, eds., *Coalition Politics in Central and Eastern Europe*. Abingdon: Routledge.

## Sweden

### Score 7

When the government consists of more than one party, as has often been the case in Sweden’s recent history, mechanisms are in place to address disagreements. Either the political leadership proactively intervenes in the policy-planning process or such disagreements are “lifted” to the political level for a ruling. These mechanisms largely unfold during informal meetings.

Public agencies are often consulted by line ministries in the early stages of the policy process due to the significant policy knowledge that public servants possess (Jacobsson, Pierre, and Sundström, 2015; Premfors and Sundström, 2007).

“Informal mechanisms of coordination among civil servants and politicians are a salient practice (Petridou and Sparf, 2017). However, they may not always be effective. Yet, informal contacts between departments and agencies are believed to be integral to the efficiency of the politico-administrative system. Informal coordination procedures effectively filter many, but not all, policy proposals (de Fine Licht and Pierre, 2017).”

Citation:

de Fine Licht, J., and Pierre, J. 2017. “Myndighetschefernas Syn på Regeringens Styrning.” Stockholm: Statskontoret.

Jacobsson, B., Pierre, J., and Sundström, G. 2015. *Governing the Embedded State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Petridou, E., and J. Sparf. 2017. “For Safety’s Sake: The Strategies of Institutional Entrepreneurs and Bureaucratic Reforms in Swedish Crisis Management, 2001–2009.” *Policy and Society* 36 (4): 556-574.

Premfors, R. and Sundström, G. 2007. *Regeringskansliet*. Stockholm: Liber.

## United States

### Score 7

Informal coordination across departments plays a significant role in cross-departmental coordination (Nou 2016). It relies primarily on personal networks, constituency relationships, and other methods. The nature of this coordination is context-specific and often depends on the issue at hand. For instance, during crisis situations, various government departments may come together to manage the situation by sending representatives to ad hoc cross-agency crisis meetings. Departments and agencies also distribute briefs and other forms of information to relevant agencies to keep them updated on their activities.

Since 1980, the federal government has operated a Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), which brings together various law enforcement agencies from both the federal government and local authorities (Herman 2005). Relevant federal agencies in the JTTF include the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Department of Homeland Security, and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The JTTF helps coordinate informal information sharing, allocate resources on an ad hoc basis when necessary, and manage responses during crisis situations. Agencies also share memos with each other using the JTTF as a conduit.

The Trump administration’s lack of experienced personnel in key agency positions led to an increased role for informal coordination. The executive branch under Trump saw calamitous coordination failures. These failures largely reflected general problems of understaffing and a lack of competent leadership in the departments and agencies during the Trump presidency.

The Biden administration is currently addressing these challenges by hiring more staff and appointing competent leaders across departments and agencies. The Biden administration is also adopting a management style reminiscent of the Obama administration’s, which was more orderly than the Trump administration’s chaotic approach.

Citation:

Jennifer Nou. 2016. "Intra-Agency Coordination." *Harvard Law Review*.

Susan Herman. 2005. "Collapsing Spheres: Joint Terrorism Task Forces, Federalism, and the War on Terror." *Willamette Law Review*.

## Czechia

Score 6

The coalition agreement of the Fiala government, which consists of five parties, includes fixed principles of coalition cooperation and coordination. The most crucial body for policy coordination is the coalition council. It consists of the coalition parties' chairpersons and up to three other representatives from each coalition party. Another body that meets more frequently is the so-called K-five, which includes the chairs of the government parties. Additionally, coalition parties have expert commissions. The expert commissions of the individual coalition parties primarily communicate among themselves in preparing legislative proposals.

There is also informal interministerial cooperation in the form of various joint projects. Informal coordination is also possible through government working and advisory bodies in which different ministries are represented.

## Netherlands

Score 6

Although informal consultations undoubtedly occur among ministers themselves; between ministers and senior officials; between ministers and legislators (such as the former Tower consultations between core cabinet members and coalition party leaders); among senior officials; between senior officials and legislators; and involving lobbyists, journalists, and scientists, there is little definitive reporting in this area. Informal consultations remain secretive, despite open government campaigns that have increased accessibility to formal documents.

Permanent parliamentary committees, for example, can serve as venues for informal contacts between legislators and senior officials, although the latter are formally constrained by the "Oekaze Kok," which prohibits such interactions. Recently, a group of administrative scientists and secretary-generals advocated relaxing this rule. The cabinet has also convened ad hoc committees around a "fixer" figure, former minister and legislator Johannes Remkes, to address pressing issues that the cabinet itself could not resolve, such as the nitrogen crisis and safety concerns related to gas drilling in Groningen.

Although there has been some disclosure about ministers' agendas, the extent of visits by lobbyists remains unclear. The popular "poldering" model also fosters an environment where informal contacts can thrive. For instance, around topics like energy transition or climate policy, formal "tables" are established with invited

stakeholders, serving as both formal and informal access points for business and other interest groups. Some, including prominent parliamentarian Pieter Omtzigt, have expressed concerns that this approach could diminish parliamentary oversight of cabinet decision-making.

Citation:

Boonstra. 2023. "Topambtenaren rijk houden tegenspraak tegen." Binnenlands Bestuur November 22.

EW, Joosten. 2023. "Onder kabinetten-Rutte explosieve groei adviescolleges." EW August 22.

De Groene Amsterdammer. 2021. "Achter de minister. Wie is toch de ambtenaar?" June 2.

Omtzigt. 2023. "Thorbeckelezing Zwolle." April 14.

## Poland

Score 6

Informal communication, including influencing specific political decisions, was common within the United Right government. This practice arose because Jarosław Kaczyński, the leader of PiS, chose not to assume the position of prime minister, preferring instead to influence policies unofficially. Formally, he served as the vice-chair of the Council of Ministers from 2020 to 2022 and 2023, as well as the chair of the Council of Ministers' Committee on National Security and Defense from 2020 to 2022. Informal meetings between high-ranking government officials or party groups often took place at the PiS headquarters on Nowogrodzka Street. These meetings were organized before strategic decisions or to diffuse ongoing conflicts between Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and Minister of Justice Zbigniew Ziobro. The decisions made in Nowogrodzka undermined formal coordination efforts within the ministerial bureaucracy and other bodies.

## Slovakia

Score 2

There is no publicly available information about the organization or contents of any informal meetings among high-ranking government officials or party groups in Slovakia. There are informal Coalition Council meetings, but only leaders of coalition parties can participate. For example, the OĽaNO-led government experienced several coordination crises – due to personal animosities between OĽaNO and SaS leaders – that undermined official efforts to enhance formal interministerial coordination mechanisms through regular meetings of coalition party leaders.

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